METRO/A16

Commonwealth Avenue, QC's 'killer highway,' to undergo facelift

SPORTS/A18

Fifteen-year-old Debbie de Villa leads RP Ladies golf by 1

WORLD/A9

85 dead in stampede during hajj 'stoning the devil' rite

ENTERTAINMENT/A2-1

Cruise to exotic places, diamonds, etc. in goodie bags of Globe awards presenters

FVR, JDV still at odds over cutting Gloria's term

By Michael Lim Ubac

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA APPEARS TO not have settled his differences with former President Fidel Ramos before the Lakas-CMD decides on whether to cut short the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

De Venecia is pushing for the "French mod-

FVR/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Palace joins photo war: 'The picture is the message'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESTERday came out with pictures of the meeting on Wednesday night between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former

DALI!!! POSE NA TAYO WITH FVR!

PALACE/ A6

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Friday, January 13, 2006 ★★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 36 P18
website: www.inq7.net

FVR: GMA can stay till 2010

Palace tells Noli: Cut ties with ABS-CBN

By Gil Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Avendaño and Nini Valera

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID VICE President Noli de Castro should cut his ties with ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. and look for a new home for his "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" (or MGB).

"My suggestion to him is to go somewhere where he is wanted. I'm sure Vice President Noli de Castro will have no problem finding a new home for [MGB]," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said in an interview.

Ermita observed that De Castro had made the weekly current affairs program an institution after close to 18 years on the air.

"It has built a loyal following and its ratings are still good. Remember, the show made him known as 'Kabayan.' Whatever channel the show transfers to, I'm sure it will contribute significantly in boosting that channel's viewership," Ermita said.

He said De Castro should take the axing of MGB as "a fresh challenge" to overcome.

The INQUIRER reported on Thursday that ABS-CBN did not renew the program's con-

PALACE/ A4

PCPO MALACAÑANG

GUESS WHO CAME TO DINNER? President Arroyo and former President Ramos break bread on Wednesday night to break the impasse on contentious Lakas issues. Behind them are Gabby Claudio, Eduardo Ermita and Jose de Venecia.

Win-win deal forged in meeting Wednesday

By Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendaño

OVER COGNAC AND red wine in her Forbes Park home, President Macapagal-Arroyo indicated she agreed to a formula that would allow her to serve out her term until 2010 but with diminished powers, if this is approved by Congress.

That's how sources in the ruling Lakas-CMD described a preliminary meeting on Wednesday night between Ms Arroyo and former President Fidel Ramos.

The sources said another meeting was scheduled tonight, before a crucial caucus tomorrow of the Lakas-CMD national directorate. The caucus was expected to discuss the proposed shift to a parliamentary system and closure—proposed by Ramos—to the issue of legitimacy hounding the 58-year-old President.

The deal reached on Wednesday night was described by one source yesterday as a "win-win formula." This involves proceeding with the scheduled 2007 elections and Ms Arroyo continuing in office, but with clipped powers until her term ends in 2010.

"GMA was amenable to it if this would be passed by Congress. She said she would follow what Congress wanted," the source said.

The meeting was initially scheduled at Malacañang but was moved to the Macapagal home in Forbes Park at the last minute. Aside from Ms Arroyo and Ramos, also present were Speaker Jose de Venecia, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio, the source said.

In a news conference, Claudio said that Ms Arroyo and Ramos had agreed on a "simple approach" in addressing the con-

FVR / A6

GMA fitness to lead top agenda of Church execs' meet

HAPPY LANDINGS IN CEBU CITY ... all over again for President Arroyo, who receives full military arrival honors, as usual.

PCPO-MALACAÑANG PHOTO

By Christian V. Esguerra

IS PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo still fit to lead this country?

The question is expected to be raised during a planned dialogue between the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) on Jan. 23.

The issue figured prominently on the list of talking points prepared by Bro. Manuel de Leon, a vice chair of the AMRSP and head of the Marist Brothers of the Philippines.

"We, too, are in search of leaders who have integrity and vision," he told the INQUIRER yesterday. "He must be God-fearing, a servant-leader, and committed to the common good."

De Leon said it was important to assess the Arroyo leadership based on these criteria in the wake of the unresolved questions over the legitimacy of her election victory in 2004.

The 119-member CBCP issued a statement last July distancing itself from mounting calls for the resignation of President Arroyo while at the same time asking her not to ignore such demands.

The Church stand was widely interpreted as an expression of support for the President, saving the Arroyo administration from imminent collapse amid allegations sparked by a wiretapping controversy that she stole the May 2004 presidential election.

The CBCP stressed that bishops should not be directly involved in politics, maintaining that the people should take the lead with Church leaders serving as spiritual guides.

Critics dismissed the position as the bishops' way of evading the issue.

However, the AMRSP, an umbrella organization of more than 300 religious groups, has steadfastly held that Ms Arroyo should resign.

Late last year, the CBCP invited the AMRSP to the dialogue in time for its annual plenary assembly on Jan. 28 to 30,

GMA FITNESS/ A4

Maguindanao sultan shot dead in front of home

By Charlie C. Señase and Nash B. Maulana
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—BARELY A MONTH AFTER being enthroned as the 25th sultan of Maguindanao, Datu Amir Muhammad Baraguir, a former INQUIRER columnist, was shot and killed by three unidentified men near his home in Barangay Salimbao, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, on Wednesday night.

Baraguir's younger brother, Datu Andy, who was with him and two other relatives aboard a family-owned service van, was wounded in the attack.

"The killing was well-planned and the killers were bold enough to execute it right in front of the victims' house," Chief Insp. Dick Masla, Sultan Kudarat police chief, said.

MAGUINDANAO/ A4

'Marines look paler, thinner, more worried'

By Volt Contreras

"THEY ARE NOT VACATIONING and playing golf."

The four US Marines charged with raping a Filipino woman last November are "restricted" to a one-story air-conditioned building that has a kitchen and living and dining areas, according to a Palace official who was allowed to see them yesterday.

Their building in the US Embassy compound in Manila is five minutes away by foot from the embassy's main structure, and is beside the motor pool and near the perimeter fence facing Manila Bay, said Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom).

Paredes emerged from the 10 a.m. visit with the most detailed description so far of the conditions of the accused, whom the embassy had been keeping from the public eye despite demands by Philippine lawmakers and militant groups that they be turned over to local authorities.

"They look paler, thinner and more worried, unlike in our first meeting," the VFACom official said of the soldiers in an INQUIRER interview shortly after his visit to the embassy.

"They seemed more hopeful [at that] time," he noted, referring to Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier and Lance Corporals Dominic Duplantis, Keith Silkwood and Daniel Smith.

Paredes and his staff first saw the accused in a conference room at the embassy on Nov. 10. The rape suspects then had numbered

MARINES/ A6

Embassy of the
United States of America

REM ZAMORA

PARTY'S OVER, the lights are taken down for the four Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman and who are confined to quarters inside the heavily guarded US Embassy compound.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol region, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/01/13/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

2 generals' promotion backed

By Philip C. Tubeza and Alcuin Papa

ADMINISTRATION LAWMAKERS YESTERDAY defended the promotion of two generals linked to the "Hello Garci" wiretap scandal, saying that sowing political intrigue would only weaken the chain of command in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Representatives Monico Puentevella (Lakas, Bacolod City), Antonio Alvarez (Kampi, Palawan) and Eduardo Veloso (NPC, Leyte) said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and other opposition legislators should respect President Macapagal-Arroyo's prerogative to promote senior military officers and make key assignments.

Critics had scored the appointment of Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon as chief of the Southern Command (Southcom) in Mindanao and Rear Admiral Tirso Danga to head the Western Command (Wescom) in Palawan.

Biazon had objected to the appointments, saying they "reeked of political payback."

Puentevella said Biazon, being a former AFP chief of staff, should be the first to realize how politics could affect the military institution.

President's prerogative

"It is ironic that being a former commanding general, Senator Biazon is unmindful of the commander in chief's prerogative to promote senior military officers. Major General Habacon had been recommended by the AFP leadership based on his capabilities and the President approved this," Puentevella said.

Alvarez urged the President's critics to respect her decision and give Danga a chance to prove himself in his new post.

"It's her prerogative and it's a good choice. Those who have acquired the habit of questioning each and every decision of the commander in chief (are) weakening the chain of command and the soldiers' morale," he said.

Alvarez disputed the charge that Danga's appointment was payback for "election services" rendered to the President and the ruling Lakas-CMD party while Danga was head of the Intelligence Services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) during the May 2004 elections.

"Those are unproven *chismis* (gossip). We assume that all generals conducted themselves in a professional way in the last elections, even those who voted for (late opposition standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr.)," Alvarez said.

Habacon has denied involvement in rigging the elections while Danga has said the Isafp did not have the capability to conduct wiretapping operations.

Alvarez said Danga was "extremely qualified" to head the "tripwire unit" on the country's left flank, which includes the Kalayaan island group, known internationally as the Spratly Islands composed of some atolls and islets that are also being claimed by China, Malaysia and Vietnam

"For us Palaweños, we expect him to be merciless against poachers and polluters and to zealously guard the crown jewel of Palawan – the Malampaya oil field," Alvarez said.

Based on merit

Veloso, a member of the Commission on Appointments, said Habacon's appointment was a well-considered decision by the President based on merit.

"Senator Biazon should respect the President's privilege to promote senior military officers. We have not seen or heard anyone in the AFP objecting to her decision except Senator Biazon. So how can he claim there is grumbling in the military?" he said.

GUN SHOW GUEST JOAN BONDOC

Philippine National Police Chief Arturo Lomibao tries out for heft one of the firearms on display at a gun show at the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City Jan. 12 as Southeast Asian Games taekwondo gold medalist Toni Rivera (right) looks on. "Responsible gun ownership is fully consistent with the rule of law," Lomibao said.

New airport luggage scheme scrapped

By Nikko Dizon

THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Authority yesterday decided to scrap its "100-percent sanitized luggage" policy in the face of vigorous protests by the Airline Operators Council and a chaotic six-hour dry-run the previous night in which at least three passengers fainted and five flights were delayed.

Airport authorities will now put a strap around each piece of luggage after it has passed through the initial x-ray inspection at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Terminal 1 and the Centennial Terminal 2.

The passengers themselves would bring their luggage to the check-in counters.

This modified luggage handling procedure was the result of an emergency meeting yesterday afternoon of the Miaa with the Airline Operators Council (AOC), which had threatened to bring its complaints against the newly enforced luggage handling regulations to the International Civil Aviation Organization.

"We're happy with the airport authority's decision," Ed Monreal, AOC's former chairman, told reporters after the meeting.

Monreal said that the agreed policy allows passengers to "look, touch, and see" their luggage but they are not allowed to open it unless they have to remove excess baggage.

The Miaa and AOC also agreed that the steel barriers at the departure areas would be re-arranged to give passengers more space; the airlines would not check in baggage with tampered straps; and a special lane would be provided for passengers who need to re-open suitcases and have them re-strapped after the removal of excess baggage.

The new procedure is to be implemented on Saturday.

Under the now-scrapped policy, passengers were not allowed to handle their luggage after it had gone through the initial x-ray screening upon entry into the terminal. Only porters were authorized to move the luggage to a holding area and on to the various airlines' check-in counters.

The airlines protested that the procedure was not only cumbersome and inconvenient but was likely to result in lost luggage and delayed flights.

At least three passengers fainted because of the long queues and circuitous process and five flights were delayed during a dry-run of the new procedure from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. last Wednesday. In spite of that, Miaa assistant general manager Angel Atutubo said the dry-run had gone smoothly.

Things were back to normal yesterday with the exception of 23 bomb-sniffing dogs from the Aviation Security Group that were deployed at the departure curbside to inspect arriving passengers.

Miaa General Manager Alfonso Cusi claimed that there was "misinformation" on the 100-percent sanitized luggage policy and that this had already been "cleared" during the meeting. He did not elaborate.

Atutubo had said earlier that the new procedures were required by the ICAO, the governing body for international aviation, but AOC officials said they suspected that the US Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Authority was behind them.

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For lack of funds, Senate holds 200 House bills

By TJ Burgonio

THE SENATE IS DEFERRING ACTION ON over 200 bills transmitted by the House of Representatives seeking to convert certain municipal and city roads to national roads due to lack of funds, Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said yesterday.

Pangilinan, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Pro Tempore Juan Flavier and the chairs of the committees on public works and education met before the holiday break and reached this consensus.

"We have committed to the early passage of some of the measures, but we are holding a number of them in abeyance pending the determination of where the funds are going to be sourced," Pangilinan said at a briefing.

A Department of Public Works and Highways study showed the road conversions would cost the government "tens of billions of pesos," he said.

"Surely we would like to pass them, but before we pass them, I think the responsible thing to do is to determine where the funds will come from. Otherwise, it will be an unfunded law," Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan predicted the same fate for measures converting high schools to national high schools also due to budgetary constraints.

"We are aware of the huge shortage of classrooms in the elementary as well as high school levels. We see no problem in nationalizing these schools; the big problem is where to get the funding," he said.

Once the roads and schools are "nationalized," the burden of funding these projects will shift from the local governments to the national government.

The senators' meeting came on the heels of congressmen's complaints about the delay in the passage of their sponsored bills.

When Congress resumes sessions on Monday, the Senate is expected to continue its deliberations on major pieces of legislation, such as the antiterror bill, the proposed credit information bureau and amendments to the Central Bank Act.

"We will suggest an all-senator caucus to identify other priority measures the Senate will be passing or will be acting on," Pangilinan said.

National bills certified as urgent and pending in the Senate are the tax amnesty bill, the Consolidated Investments and Incentives Code of the Philippines, bills extending the utilization period of the agricultural competitiveness enhancement fund, and measures establishing the national bio-ethanol fuel program.

The Senate committee of the whole is also resuming its hearings on the proposed P1.06-trillion national budget for 2006 on Tuesday.

Ibon: Economy bad despite peso rebound

By Norman Bordadora

LEFT-LEANING IBON FOUNDATION YESTERDAY said the economy was in a bad state, contradicting Malacañang's pronouncement that the country was off to a flying start in the new year as the peso continued to remain strong even after the Christmas holidays.

Sonny Africa, senior researcher of the foundation, said that the increase in the remittances of overseas Filipino workers and "effective (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas) manipulation" of the currency markets were the only scaffolding propping up the peso.

"These helped feed Malacañang's objective of creating an illusion of good economic performance and strength," Africa said.

Africa said that while the Palace continued to drumbeat the strength of the peso, telling indicators, such as the unemployment and inflation rates, showed the economy was far off from having a flying start.

Calling attention to data from the National Statistics Office, Africa said that while the unemployment rate dropped slightly from 11.8 percent in 2004 to 11.4 percent in 2005, the number of jobless people continued to be among the highest in the 50 years.

Africa said the 7.7-percent inflation registered in 2005 was "the highest since 1998."

"High inflation pushed up the daily cost of living for a family of six in Metro Manila to P650, almost double the minimum wage of P350," Africa said.

With the increase in the value added tax rate from 10 percent to 12 percent in February and the expected hiking of electricity and water rates, "there are ominous signs that 2006 will be even worse for the people."

"Filipinos will be left to scrape out a living however and whenever they can," Africa added.

Abalos asks Congress to decide on automation

By Jerome Aning

WITH ITS PREVIOUS ELECTION modernization programs stymied by legal issues and allegations of corruption, the Commission on Elections is leaving the question of whether to automate the 2007 mid-term elections to Congress and the Arroyo administration to resolve, Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said yesterday.

"If we are to computerize in 2007, we should know by now so we can prepare," the Comelec chief told reporters. Then, directing himself to the two most powerful branches of government, Abalos added, "Let us define our position now: are we for modernization or not?"

He said Congress should come up with the pertinent amendments to the modernization law with regards to the type of technology to be used in automation, he said.

"Let us amend the law to allow Comelec to choose counting machines that are attuned to the times. We should have the chance to [acquire] the latest technology that's appropriate for us," Abalos added.

Once the amendments are passed, the Department of Budget can then figure a way where to get the necessary funding, he said.

Comelec officials were willing to sit down with lawmakers to discuss ways to improve and further hasten the implementation the modernization law, Abalos said, adding it was all right by poll body if the voting and counting in 2007 would be carried out manually.

Citing bidding irregularities, the Supreme Court has junked a billion-peso deal entered into by the Comelec for the purchase of automated counting machines. It also stopped the elections body from implementing an electronic vote-count transmission project.

Abalos and four other Comelec commissioners have rejected demands by politicians and cause-oriented groups for them to resign following the botched computerization deal and allegations of their complicity in rigging the 2004 presidential election.

The Comelec chief, who insisted that the nullified automation deal was above-board, said the agency was hesitant in pressing for computerization because of possible insinuations of graft and corruption.

New ILO exec to push for gender equality at work

By Jerome Aning

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE workplace is one of the top priorities of the newly appointed director of the International Labor Organization's Manila-based Subregional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

"Gender equality is not just about women's rights; it is about equality for every boy or girl to have the opportunity for education and work," said Linda Wirth, who headed ILO's Bureau for Gender Equality in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2003.

Wirth, an Australian, promised to push for better jobs, decent working conditions, equal opportunities and respect for labor rights in her area of jurisdiction.

"I always wanted to go work in an ILO office in the regions like ILO Manila because this is where the real action for decent work takes place," she said. "I look forward to working with governments, employers, workers and other partners of the ILO."

She said she felt "very happy" to work in the Philippines, adding: "I had a dream to come here in the Philippines because I was interested in human rights and social justice as a young idealistic student in Australia."

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No more asking husband "do I look fat?"

"Do I look fat?" is something she won't have to ask her husband again. Lyn Ching-Pascual is enthused with how Marie France shaped her body from a huge American size 10 to a sexy size 4 in just two months. Twelve pounds lighter, she can now dress any way she wants. She can show off her body in fitted clothes without feeling self-conscious of excess bulges. "Slimming down has definitely changed my life. It's so much easier now to move around and I'm more confident when dressing up. I don't have to wear black all the time. I can dress in white or any other color because I know I look good," says a proud Lyn.

"People compliment me every single day. My friends congratulate me because for the first time in my life I have become sexy!" For Lyn, who has been fat all her life, compliments are certainly music to her ears. "I was an obese child. I weighed 140 lbs when I was only 10 years old. It was so bad it got to a point that my skin gave up on me. I had stretch marks on my legs – at 10 years old! Imagine that!"

When she got older, Lyn went through different weight-loss methods. "Yo-yo dieting... gym (I'd workout religiously for months, then stop)...badminton (I'd play everyday, lose weight, then stop)... it got to a point when I was on the verge of an eating disorder. I looked really, really sick: dry skin... I wasn't moving too much because I was always tired... I couldn't breathe well... I had a lot of problems at that time. Plus, I really love food! That's why it's so hard for me to go on a diet. Surgical options? Honestly, I would choose to have surgery only if my life depended on it. Because I know something can still be done to get the body I want without resorting to drastic measures. Also every time you go under the knife, there's always a possibility something might go wrong. I'm not willing to take that chance."

That's why she couldn't have been happier when she enrolled at Marie France. She lost a lot of weight without having to resort to invasive procedures or crash diets. "I'm very happy because I can still eat whatever I want. I have a sweet tooth so I eat 2 bags of caramel popcorn everyday – and I never miss a day." Now, everybody's asking how she did it. With a smile, she unabashedly utters the words "Marie France."

She adds, "Their treatments are very easy, very fast, very safe, and very convenient for me. After the show *(Unang Hirit)* which ends at around 8:30-8:45am, I go straight to Marie France. They open early so there's no problem regarding schedule. It's very convenient because whatever I wear when I arrive, I can also wear when I leave. I don't have to take a bath or time to rest after a heavy workout. At Marie France, you just lie down and everyone else does the work for you. I can sleep and rest while losing weight. Where can you get that kind of deal?"

"People from the audience... the show... they tell me that I look good... really good. Even a close friend of mine said, 'I have never seen you this thin before'. That's because before, when I used to workout a lot, I lost weight but I looked bulky. I lost pounds but not inches. With Marie France, I lose both pounds AND inches," Lyn stressed.

To women who want to finally get rid of those excess pounds this new year, Lyn has this to say, "Don't do anything else, just Marie France. You will lose weight while sleeping. Do something for yourself. Go to Marie France because your weight-loss is going to last and it will make you happy for sure. It made me happy."

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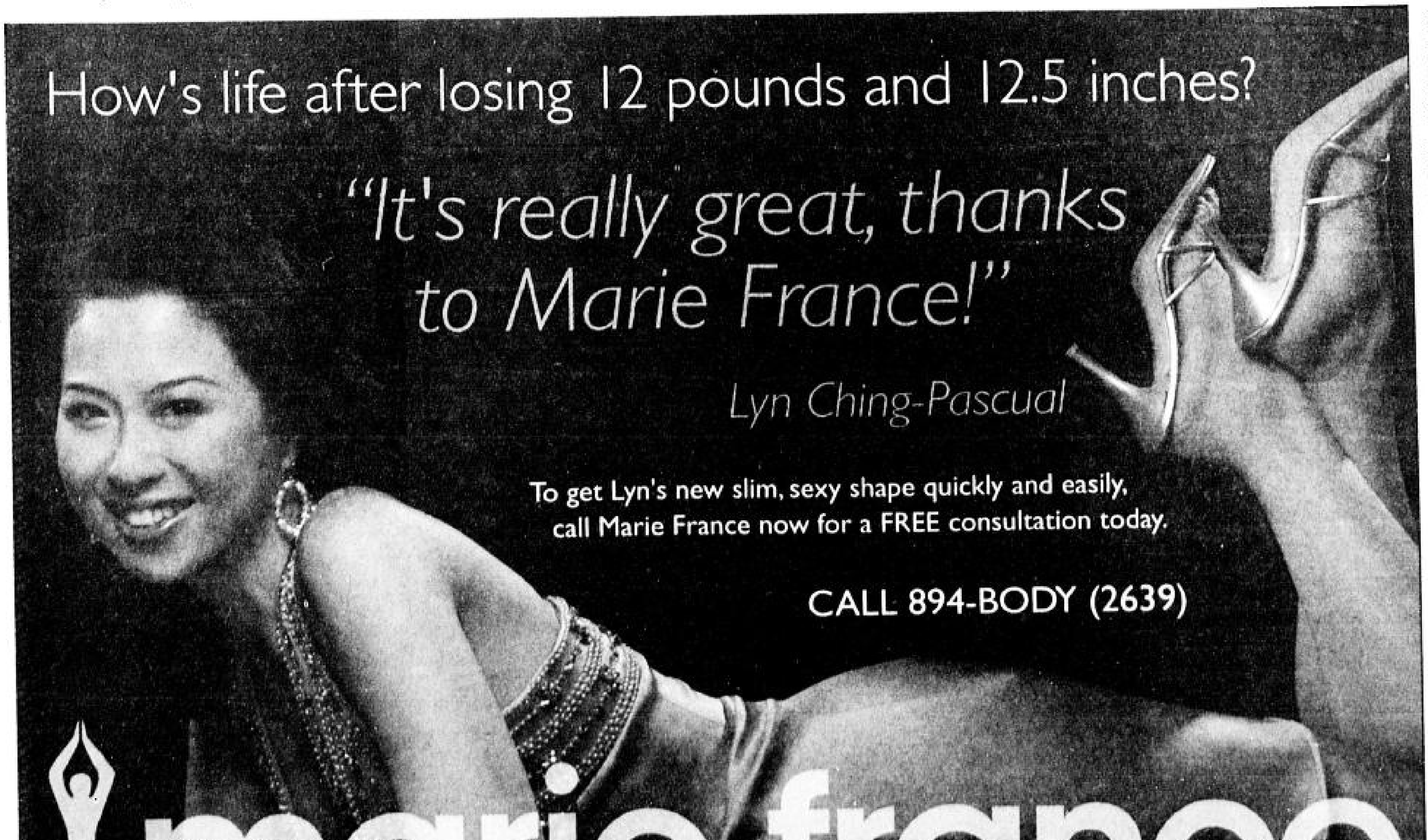

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Palace tells Noli: Cut ties with ABS-CBN

From page A1

tract when it expired last Dec. 31, and quoted a network insider as saying that this was because of De Castro's "problems" with the network owners, the Lopezes, regarding his support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Maria Ressa, ABS-CBN news and current affairs head, denied this, saying it was an "organizational move." She also said she did not make decisions in the newsroom on the basis of the supposed vested interests of the network owners.

De Castro himself declined to comment.

He stressed that he had ceased to be connected with MGB since 2004, when he assumed office as Vice President.

But he still hosts a program at the Lopez-owned radio station dzMM, for which he is not compensated.

'Purely internal matter'

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that the controversy was "a purely internal matter" between ABS-CBN management and De Castro, and that dragging the President into it was "unfair and uncalled for."

"All we are interested in is the observance by all media of the media Code of Ethics, responsible and impartial reporting, and serving the national interest," he said.

Bunye extolled De Castro as "a champion of high standards of journalism," for which, he said, the Vice President was "recognized by the people."

He refused to comment on whether Malacañang viewed ABS-CBN's coverage of the President as biased or tending toward the negative.

"I will not make a comment on that because I think the public is the better judge of whether they are biased against us," he said.

Negotiations

Erwin Tulfo, one of the hosts of MGB, yesterday told the Inquirer by phone that negotiations for the program's transfer to another TV station had been in the works even before it was pulled off the air.

Tulfo denied rumors that the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, was brokering a deal between GMA 7 and Arlene de Castro, wife of the Vice President and head of Bayan Productions, which produced MGB as a block-timer at ABS-CBN.

He said Arlene de Castro was negotiating MGB's move to QTV-11, an allied company of GMA 7.

"She is also talking to RPN 9 and ABC 5, not only for MGB, but also for her other shows," he said, adding that Bayan Productions also produced TV specials.

Tulfo confirmed that rumors that MGB had been dropped by ABS-CBN had been circulating as early as October.

However, he said, he was still taken by surprise when Arlene de Castro announced during a regular meeting of the MGB staff that Dec. 31, 2005, would be the last time the show would air over ABS-CBN.

"We were expecting the show to be with ABS-CBN until March. What would they replace it with?" he said.

MGB aired on an evening prime time slot every Saturday on Channel 2 on free TV, and on Channel 8 on Sky Cable and Home Cable.

"Kamao," a show on Philippine boxing hosted by Ted Failon, has replaced it for the meantime.

'Kababalaghan'

Tulfo said he was on leave when the show's fate was sealed.

He refused to comment on the reason for its cancellation. But he said it had been one of the network's highest rating programs.

He described MGB as "known for environmental stories, police stories and even *kababalaghan* (supernatural) stories," he said.

"We were never into political issues," he said. "Even if there had been political stories that were so controversial and would surely give the show a high rating, we never used these stories for MGB. These stories have their own forum, and it is not MGB."

The cancellation of the show has left Tulfo in employment limbo.

He was among the more than 200 ABS-CBN employees offered retirement packages last year. He has remained in the network's talent pool of anchor persons and has a radio program on dzME.

As MGB anchor, Tulfo drew his pay from Bayan Productions.

"ABS-CBN has been promising me a new show, but one has yet to materialize," he said. "I'm getting tired of waiting."

Cheers ...

In Lucena City, Jay Lim, program officer of Tanggol Kalikasan, said the public interest legal defense center for the environment had lost an ally.

"We felt sad over the fate of MGB. The TV program had been our able comrade in our environmental protection advocacy, especially here in Quezon [province]," Lim said.

Lim recalled how the MGB staff had joined Tanggol Kalikasan in its environmental protection efforts on Mt. Banahaw and Tayabas Bay.

"MGB served as our trumpet to awaken government officials who had been remiss in their duties to protect the environment. The program also helped us in our campaign to bring the issue of environmental protection to the people," he said, adding:

"We lost one ally in our common struggle to protect the environment."

... And jeers

In Manila, the Samahan Laban sa Pang-a-Agrabyado ng Meralco (SLAM) described the supposed friction between ABS-CBN and De Castro over the latter's support for Ms Arroyo as a "zarzuela" (stage musical).

SLAM spokesperson Alexander de Luna said the Arroyo-De Castro alliance had always had the blessings of the Lopezes, supposedly in exchange for favorable government treatment in cases involving the family's business interests.

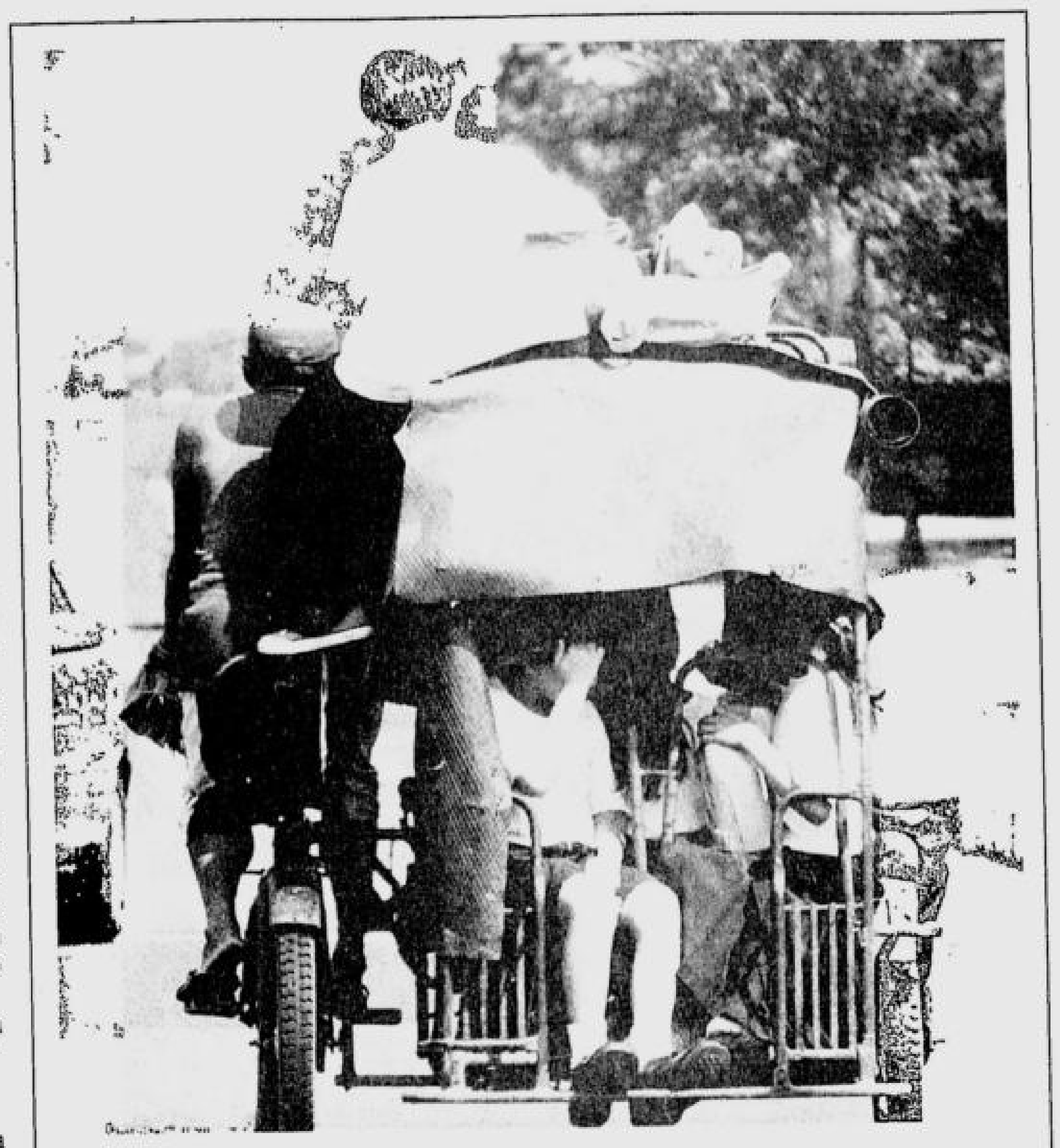
The Lopezes also own public utilities like Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and Maynilad Water Services Inc.

"This is a 'wag the dog' situation meant to eclipse stories on numerous calls for Ms Arroyo to step down, including one from former President Fidel V. Ramos," De Luna said.

"Wag the Dog" was a film about a president who stage-managed a phony war to pry public attention from his administration's scandals.

De Luna surmised that the real reason for the axing of MGB was its poor ratings.

He said the people had seen through MGB as a vehicle used by ABS-CBN to launch De Castro's political career. *With reports from Nini Valera and Cynthia D. Balana in Manila; Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



TYKES ON TRIKE

These school children take the slow unsafe ride home from school on board a pedicab along United Nations Avenue in Manila. REM ZAMORA

Maguindanao sultan shot ...

From page A1

Baraguir, who would have turned 46 on Jan. 16, was an expert on the Malay-Muslim culture, especially on Maguindanao, and an analyst of global Islamist and contemporary Muslim political trends.

At the time of his death, he was involved in policy, management and development work in the private sector.

He wrote for the Inquirer's "Kris-Crossing Mindanao" column in 2002 and worked for several local publications, either as editor or columnist. As a hard-hitting columnist, he often criticized politicians and their excesses.

He was the spiritual leader and founding member of Radyo Kalimudan, a program which espoused moderate, tolerant and nonviolent Islam and aired daily over dxMS station here.

Police probe motive

"We are looking into all possible angles," Masla said when asked about the possible motive. He said investigators were not discounting politics, tribal conflict, personal grudges and even Baraguir's previous media practice in their probe.

Masla said the killers, who were riding on two motorcycles, waited for the sultan near the Baraguir residential compound shortly before 7 p.m.

After Baraguir and Datu Andy, 35, alighted from the van and were walking toward the house, one of the assailants approached them and started firing his gun, Masla said.

Baraguir died on the spot. His brother was wounded and brought to the hospital by relatives.

Policemen failed to catch the attackers, Masla said.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes ordered the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao police "to leave no stone unturned in the probe."

Reyes and National Anti-Poverty Commission Chair Zamzamin Ampatuan, who were among Baraguir's well-wishers during his enthronement on Dec. 12 last year, condemned the killing.

"There is a need for a full-dressed investigation that will pinpoint the suspects and the masterminds," said Ampatuan.

Media community

Local journalists mourned the death of a colleague who, they said, could have been a "plus factor" in the government's peace efforts in uniting Moro clans.

Baraguir was born on Jan. 16, 1960, to Sultan Muhammad Gutierez Baraguir and Bai Hadja Fatima Carmen Andong.

He took up International Relations at Mindanao State University in Marawi City as a government scholar and pursued further studies.

He married Bai Moihra Sinsuat, with whom he had one child, and Bai Zainab Andong, with whom he had six children.

A development and management expert, Baraguir served the government, both on the national and local levels, in various capacities. He was consultant or special assistant to governors, legislators and Cabinet secretaries.

Sought-after speaker

He was associate editor of the Catholic Church-run The Mindanao Cross, a local biweekly tabloid, in 1994. He started writing for the now defunct Isyu in 1995 before moving to the Mindanao Kris, also a local tabloid, as a columnist in 1996.

He was also a sought-after speaker or lecturer on Islam, history, genealogy and development. *With a report from Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 11 ISSUE, the fifth paragraph of a story on Page A2—"DOJ admits error in letting suspect go"—misstated that "DOJ prosecutors asked the Regional Trial Court in Tacurong City last month to rescind its order dismissing Esperat and fellow accused Estrella Sabay from the murder charges." The court earlier dismissed murder charges against Sabay and Osmeña Montañer—not Marlene Esperat. Esperat, a journalist, was the murder victim; Montañer and Sabay were the alleged masterminds in Esperat's killing.

* * *

IN EARLY COPIES of the same issue, the banner headline and story in the Metro Section on Page A17—"Flyover off limits for 6 hours daily"—misstated the number of hours that the C-5 Katipunan flyover would be closed to traffic daily beginning this week. For 30 days, the flyover will be closed to all types of vehicles from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily. That's seven—not six—hours.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, the caption of a photo of Katherine de Castro on Page A7 misstated the acronym of the TV news program that she coanchored. Katherine de Castro coanchored "Magandang Gabi, Bayan." The program's acronym is MGB — not MUB.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

GMA fitness to lead top agenda of Church execs ...

From page A1

De Leon said.

The assembly at the Pope Pius XII Catholic Center on United Nations Avenue, Manila, will be the first of two plenary gatherings of the country's bishops. The second will be in July.

De Leon said the invitation came shortly after the congregations met in a closed-door assembly at Ateneo University to tackle the raging political crisis.

No surrender to apathy

During the assembly, AMRSP representatives agreed that "we cannot surrender to apathy," noting that the public seemed to have lost interest in pursuing the truth about the wiretapping scandal.

In the talking points he prepared, De Leon urged fellow clergymen to help "bring back moral order in order to build trust."

"We should actively work together through education and good governance in ensuring genuine reforms to take place," he said.

De Leon also sought to clarify the role of the religious amid the political crisis, saying it was to be as the "sower of the Good News and prophets of the Gospel values such as truth, justice and charity."

"We need to be discerning through active contemplation and prayer, at the same time contemplative in action," he said. "We need also to journey with the people and their struggle for a just and humane society."

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Dr. Arturo M. de Castro is a specialist in the field of credit transactions, thus earning the monicker "foreclosure buster". He finished cum laude with a bachelor of laws degree from UP and obtained his masters and doctor of laws degree from the University of Michigan. He is also a professorial lecturer in commercial law in several law schools, including UP, Ateneo and Lyceum.

Atty. Jim V. Lopez is an expert and authority in the Asset Protection law and wrote the book, ***Judgment Proof: Philippine Asset Protection Law (2003).*** He is a three-time winner of the National Book Awards (Manila Critics Circle.) He graduated from the U.P. College of Law & took post-graduate law studies at Harvard Law School, University of California (Hastings), and the University of Southern California.

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400-PERCENT HIKE

DENR chief notes entry of P518B in investments

By Norman Bordadora

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND Natural Resources has documented the entry of more than P518 billion in fresh investments in 2005, a nearly 400-percent increase over 2004.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor made the announcement early this week in a sort of valedictory before going on indefinite leave to serve as President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff.

"This is a huge increase," Defensor said, comparing the P518.13 billion in 2005 to the P130.98 billion invested in 2004, representing a 396-percent increase.

These were investments that were issued environmental compliance certificates (ECCs), which are required of corporations whose operations may affect the country's environment and natural resources. The certificates are given once the firms have satisfied environmental protection requirements .

The DENR issued 4,968 ECCs in 2005.

Defensor credited the increase to the influx of investments in power, mining and infrastructure.

DENR statistics showed that new power plants brought in the largest share of investments with more than P39.9 billion.

The major players were First National Gas Power Corp., a project proponent of the San Gabriel power plant located in Sta. Rita, Batangas, and the Salcon Power Corp. that serves two 100-megawatt coal-fired power plants in Colon, Naga, Cebu.

Another player in the power industry that sought an ECC last year was Mirant Pagbilao Corp. which manages the Pagbilao expansion project in Pagbilao, Quezon.

Next to power plants came infrastructure projects with total investments of P4.5 billion. This included the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System with its Manila Third sewerage projects in Metro Manila, Taytay and Cainta, Rizal.

In mining, total investments amounted to P3.7 billion and topping the list were the Diwalwal Direct State Development project in Monkayo, Compostela Valley, and the proposed Clay Mining project in San Fernando, Cebu.

Golf courses also accounted for a huge chunk of the investments at P658.6 million and topping the list were the South Pacific Davao Golf Course project in Davao City and the South Forbes Golf and Leisure Club.

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Asean to push for security for tourism

TOURISM MINISTERS FROM THE 10-NATION Asean bloc will meet in Davao City today to discuss measures to protect the region's travel destinations from terrorism.

"The threat of terrorism remains a challenge for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations," Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano told AFP ahead of the meeting, which ends on Jan. 21.

"However, with the collective efforts of the governments and private sector in the region, appropriate safety measures are being instituted to ensure a safe, sound and secure travel within the different destinations of the region."

The meeting is being held in Davao, a city that has come under attack from al-Qaida-linked militants in the past.

Muslim militants believed to be former members of the separatist group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) bombed the city's airport and a busy wharf in March 2003, killing over 100 people, including an American.

The 12,800-strong MILF is waging a rebellion for a separate state in Mindanao, but is currently in peace talks with the government.

Intelligence officials in the Philippines and in the region, however, say the group has harbored foreign militants from the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

The JI is behind the 2002 and 2005 bombings on the Indonesian resort island of Bali that killed over 200 people.

The MILF is also believed to have some influence over the Abu Sayyaf, a small gang of Islamic militants on the US state department's list of foreign terrorist organizations that has carried out major attacks in the south.

Besides terrorism issues, ministers will also discuss ways to promote Asean as a "single destination" to get a bigger share of the world tourism market, Durano said. *AFP*

Mike A off again

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE MIGUEL ARROYO left again yesterday for Hong Kong.

Sources at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) told the INQUIRER that Arroyo left on board Cathay Pacific flight CX 906 at around 11 a.m.

The purpose of the trip of President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband was not known.

He was reportedly seen off by youngest son, Dato, Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) general manager, Alfonso Cusi, and Miaa assistant general manager for security and emergency services, retired Brig. Gen. Angel Atutubo.

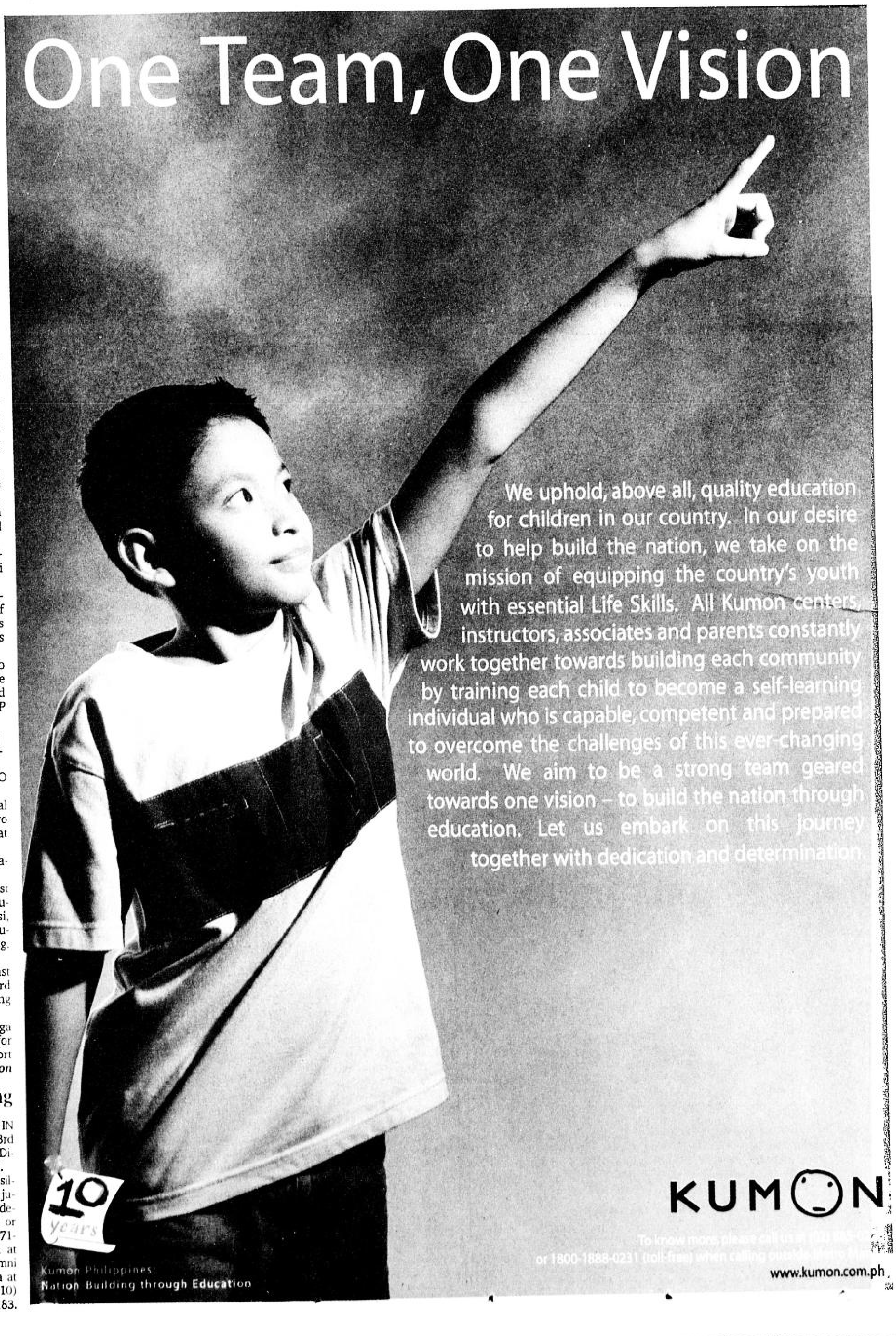
The First Gentleman was in Hong Kong last month to treat the gold medalists of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games (SEAG) to Hong Kong Disneyland.

The First Couple's eldest son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo also left for San Francisco Wednesday night, the airport sources told the INQUIRER. *Nikko Dizon*

Imus Institute homecoming

GRADUATES OF THE IMUS INSTITUTE IN Imus, Cavite, have been called to attend the 83rd grand alumni homecoming on Jan. 21 at its Dimasalang campus. Registration starts at 3 p.m.

The host of the event is Class '81, this year's silver jubilarians. Members of Class '66, the ruby jubilarians, may contact the following for more details: Monina Torneros-Talens at 872-9799 or 0917526-0360; Delfin Espiritu at (046) 471-0266 or 0917843-8443; and Nerissa Cani at (046) 434-0341 or 0917795-3268. Alumni based abroad may contact Patricio Candalla at (201)798-1249; Marilou Salgado-Alivia at (510) 886-5197; and Marino Camia at (619)556-0183.



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FVR: GMA can stay till 2010

From page A1

tentious Charter change issues. These included her tenure and the scrapping of the 2007 elections as recommended by her hand-picked Consultative Commission last month to pave the way for the institution of a parliament in 2010.

Meeting warm and cozy

Claudio did not give details, but said the three-hour meeting was "relaxed, warm, cozy, intelligent and fun." He produced photographs of the event.

Ramos suggested the simple approach, Claudio said, and this was why the two leaders only discussed Charter changes for more than 10 minutes.

"At the back of everybody's mind, everybody realizes that the party is confronted with such delicate and contentious matters such as No-El (no election) and the question of the terms of office of elected incumbent officials."

"So a particular proposal was put on the table on how best to approach (them) without risking a division on the part of the party, let alone between President Ramos and President Arroyo," Claudio said.

GMA no position on No-El

The proposal of Ramos was "easily and happily accepted by everybody else," he said.

"It does put a happy conclusion, I think, to many of the anxieties that have happened over the past several days," Claudio told reporters.

On Monday, the 77-year-old Ramos called on Ms Arroyo to resign by 2007 and run for parliament to resolve doubts about her presidency following disclosures in the "Hello Garci" tapes that she had rigged the May 2004 presidential election.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. Or so it looks from the photo-op of Ms Arroyo and her four dinner guests at the Macapagal home in Forbes Park. From left are Claudio, Ermita, Ramos and De Venecia.

MALCAÑANG PHOTO

The President, who has denied election fraud charges, had earlier rejected the Ramos demand. She said she had a mandate to rule until 2010. Ms Arroyo had also turned down Ramos' call earlier that she state her position on the proposed scrapping of the 2007 elections.

An INQUIRER source earlier said that Ms Arroyo had also agreed Wednesday night to the Ramos proposal to go ahead with the 2007 elections in a bid to head off party squabbles.

Another source said the Forbes Park gathering included a presentation of the French parliament model espoused by De Venecia. The French model has a strong president and a ceremonial prime minister.

But there would be shared powers between the president and the prime minister until the end of Ms Arroyo's term in 2010.

Under the De Venecia formula, the President's role would be symbolic—the prime minister will run the day-to-day affairs of the government.

"After 2010 or after Ms Arroyo's term expires, the prime minister will then have complete powers to run the state," the source said.

Filipino model

Another Lakas source said that while Ramos welcomed the holding of the 2007 elections for parliament and local leaders, he might reject the De Venecia model.

"He likes the Filipino model, meaning electing new members of the parliament and if possible, a nominal president," the source said.

"If FVR rejects this before the national directorate problem on Saturday, then there will be a crisis within the party. The party might be destroyed," the source added.

Asked why Ms Arroyo had been silent about her feud with Ramos, the source said: "The President has learned to be calibrated in her response, that's for sure."

He said the talks covered other issues on party matters and governance, the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, energy, tourism, aquaculture, infrastructure and Ramos' efforts to promote investments in the country.

Claudio denied the INQUIRER report that Ramos was upset over the guest list for the national directorate meeting which the presidential political adviser had prepared.

Caucus list acceptable

On the contrary, Claudio said he had faxed a copy of the guest list and the meeting's agenda to Ramos before Wednesday night's dinner and that Ramos said the list was fine.

During the meeting, Ramos also detailed to the group the meeting he had with Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Vicente Sotto III early in the month, according to Claudio.

Generally, he said the "tone, substance and ambiance of the dinner meeting were an unmistakable reiteration of the two Presidents' support for each other."

"I think we will come out of the (Lakas) meeting feeling exuberant, happy and satisfied with the status of unity and comradeship within the party," Claudio said.

He was also confident that after Saturday's national directorate meeting, Lakas would be "more united and bonded than ever before."

GMA sure Noli will win over Loren in poll case

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is confident that questions on the legitimacy of her presidency will "die a natural death" in view of the "favorable turnout" in the recount of votes cast in the 2004 vice presidential race.

Speaking before some 8,000 students at the Gullas Medical Center, Ms Arroyo said she was sure Vice President Noli de Castro would win the electoral protest lodged by his rival, former Sen. Loren Legarda. She said the trend in the recount, especially of the votes cast in Cebu, showed no evidence of irregularity.

"If the trends of the results of the revision of the protest against Noli de Castro continues, my election lawyer, [Romulo] Macalintal, is very optimistic that we will finish the 2004 poll controversy in the presidency, and all these political grandstanding and poll cheating at the level of the president will soon die a natural death," she said.

Macalintal, who also serves as De Castro's counsel before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET), is also observing the recount, Ms Arroyo said.

She said that 771 ballot boxes from Mandaue City had been opened, and that the PET had started opening the 692 ballot boxes from Lapulapu City.

According to the President, the initial recount showed no electoral fraud in the 2004 elections, particularly in Cebu province.

"There was no evidence of poll irregularity that was discovered, so our lawyer is optimistic that the more than one million vote lead that I got from the entire province of Cebu and Cebu City, from which the bulk of my final lead [came] will be confirmed, and the legitimacy of my proclamation will be unassailable and should be respected," she said.

In an informal talk with reporters after her speech, Ms Arroyo said she hoped the opposition would honor the result of the recount.

Meanwhile, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal reiterated his position that there was no election fraud in the province in 2004.

"I already made a statement in May, and I believe that our fellow brothers in C-Cimpel were telling the truth when they reported to me that there was no cheating in Cebu," Vidal said.

He was referring to the report of the Cebu Citizens Involvement Maturation and Empowerment Liberation, the local counterpart of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections, that the conduct of the 2004 elections in Cebu was fair and clean.

The President was in Cebu to attend the founding anniversary of the Gullas Medical Center in Barangay Banilad, Mandaue City.

FVR, JDV still at odds over cutting Gloria's term

From page A1

el" that would allow Ms Arroyo to keep her post until 2010 under the proposed parliamentary system.

His "solution" to the political crisis runs counter to Ramos' proposal for Ms Arroyo to relinquish power by June 2007 to allow parliamentary elections to push through as planned.

Ramos had proposed the exit plan for Ms Arroyo to resolve lingering doubts about her legitimacy as a result of the "Hello Garci" tapes that indicated that she rigged the presidential election in 2004.

De Venecia, who was at the meeting between Ms Arroyo and Ramos Wednesday night, said the former President "agreed on the absolute need to push forward the strategic Charter amendments."

'Torn between 2 loves'

De Venecia, described by two legislators as "torn between two lovers" while hanging on to the speakership "by a cotton thread," called on Ramos to adhere to the party decision to be arrived at during the directorate meeting tomorrow.

Ramos, who cofounded Lakas-CMD in 1992, is the party's chair emeritus, while Ms Arroyo is its chair.

"I believe FVR (Ramos) will adhere to the party decision and we continue to rule by consensus," said De Venecia, the party president.

The Speaker "lamented" that the issue of whether to cut short Ms Arroyo's term was "clouding the more important issue of shifting to a parliamentary government."

Middle ground

Despite differences with Ramos, De Venecia expected the Lakas meeting to "strengthen the campaign for Charter reform" in the House.

"It will produce a synthesis—a middle ground—for (what) is important is that these proposals will be acceptable to the party," he said

'7 strategic amendments'

De Venecia said he would endorse "seven strategic Charter amendments" and a "French-style parliamentary system," which would allow Ms Arroyo to "continue as Chief Executive with substantial powers" until the end of her term.

De Venecia, accused by Representatives Pichay and Rafael Mariano of being "too driven" to become prime minister, said that in the proposed three-year transition period from 2007 to 2010, Ms Arroyo would be "assisted by a prime minister who would be the chief operating officer of government."

The Speaker denied that he was playing it safe by supporting Ms Arroyo's continued stay in power through the French model, saying he was only after following the rule of law.

Thumbs down

"If we follow the Constitution and the rule of law she must serve her term until 2010," he said.

However, even before the Lakas directorate meeting could resolve the impasse, De Venecia's allies led by House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles rejected the Ramos formula.

In a statement, Nograles announced that Lakas lawmakers would "overwhelmingly thumb down" Ramos' proposal to cut short Ms Arroyo's term.

If worse comes to worst, the majority of Lakas members would "side" with Ms Arroyo, he said.

He urged other Lakas members to junk the Ramos proposal because "the shift to parliament does not mean the President should step down. Parliamentary transition should be gradual until 2010."

Dare to take sides

Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico, for his part, said the Speaker was not only torn between two lovers but also "confused on who to sleep with—either with PGMA [Ms Arroyo] or with FVR."

He dared De Venecia to take sides, or retire from politics.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., who once challenged De Venecia for the speakership, said De Venecia's hold on the top House post was tenuous.

"For how long? For as long as he plays his cards very well. *Namamangka sa dalawang ilog.* (He's rowing in two rivers.) It's good if the two boats will always be in a parallel position. If the other boat goes in another direction, then he might be left in the river either swimming or sinking," Pichay said.

The lawmaker, who postponed his speakership bid late last year to preserve party unity, said De Venecia was "hallucinating" because his "win-win solution" aka the French model was actually a "lose-lose" scenario.

"The most basic question is: Can we amend the Constitution? Without the participation and cooperation of the Senate, I doubt if we can even touch the Constitution," Pichay said.

Same banana

Rep. Crispin Beltran said De Venecia's proposal was an "atrocious scenario" because "you still have PGMA and other traditional elite politicians in power, and a sell-out Constitution that is far worse, antinationalist and antipeople than the existing one."

Beltran reiterated that a shift to a parliamentary form of government would "exacerbate" the economic and political woes of the people.

"It's the same banana—the same formula for social crisis. It only intends to slightly reshuffle power-sharing among traditional and elite politicians, such as FVR, De Venecia and PGMA, who have basically kept a stranglehold on the country's flawed governing bodies and have pushed for economic policies that have kept the majority of Filipinos dirt poor," he said.

Palace joins photo war: 'The picture is . . .

From page A1

President Fidel V. Ramos to disprove speculations of their frayed relations.

The pictures showed the two allies all smiles with their thumbs up at the Macapagal residence in Forbes Park, Makati City.

"The meeting is the message. The picture is the message," crowed Gabriel Claudio, presidential adviser on political affairs.

Claudio said the Arroyo-Ramos photos were mainly directed at members of the Lakas-CMD to allay fears of a widening rift between their leaders, especially with the meeting of the ruling party in Malacañang scheduled for tomorrow.

The party directorate meeting will decide whether to accept Ramos' proposal for Ms Arroyo to cut short her term and step down in June 2007.

Photo power

The snapshots came after the photo of Ramos with Sen. Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Vicente Sotto III and that of Ramos with Vice President Noli de Castro were published.

The Ramos-Drilon-Sotto and Ramos-De Castro photos were released to prove that they had met in the office of Ramos at the Export-Import Bank building in Makati.

The meetings with Ms Arroyo's critics (Drilon and Sotto) and with De Castro have raised speculations of a rift between the President and Ramos.

"A picture is worth more than a thousand words and they graphically depict the nature of the meeting," chimed in Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye before showing the photographs of the President and Ramos in a jovial mood at the dining table, in the hallway, and at the main door of the house in the company of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Claudio.

Tit for tat

While Bunye denied that Malacañang was engaging in a tit-for-tat battle with the opposition by releasing the Arroyo-Ramos photos, he could not deny the power of a single photo.

"Whether the picture is from Sotto or Claudio, the message is the same. The pictures say a lot," Bunye said.

Bunye said that for a high-powered meeting where the agenda was confidential, he found it much better to issue a photograph because the "event will be better understood."

De Venecia was at the meeting from the beginning, according to Claudio. The Speaker came ahead of Ramos.

Marines look paler, thinner, more worried, says official

From page A1

six, including Albert Lara and Corey Burris, who were later cleared in the preliminary investigation and sent back to their base in Okinawa late last month.

'Restricted to quarters'

US Embassy officials led by political officer Paul O'Friel and Peter Collins of the US Marine Corps presented the accused to Paredes and three VFACom staff members in a conference room yesterday, before they proceeded to see their quarters.

Paredes said it was from O'Friel that he learned that the accused had been "restricted to quarters," a disclosure that the embassy would repeat in a press statement later in the day.

In a phone interview, US press attaché Matthew Lussenhop declined to confirm the details Paredes had reported from the visit.

But he [illegible] that the four Marines were being held in "modest quarters," and that "they are not wandering all over the embassy."

"I saw them and my curiosity was satisfied. They are not being given special treatment," Paredes said.

He said he had requested a second visit to check if the Marines had remained in the country as required under the VFA, and to see exactly how they were being held under US custody.

"They are not there vacationing, and definitely they are not playing golf," he said, alluding to a wry remark he made in previous interviews on why he wanted to see the soldiers' condition.

24-hour security

The accused are being held under "24-hour security" in an off-white building that, Paredes said, once served as the embassy's postal office and has since been "converted into [illegible] quarters."

The windows at the back of the building facing the bay were fitted with iron grills, he said.

He recalled seeing up to three bedrooms, each wide enough for four to five beds.

The guards have their own quarters within the same building, he said, adding that he did not notice any TV sets in the areas he was shown.

According to the security personnel who served as his guide, Paredes said, the accused were assigned to their bedrooms in pairs.

"It's very simple, not luxurious at all," he said.

The accused were in civilian clothes when presented to Paredes and company, and were flanked by four Filipino defense lawyers, including retired Philippine Ambassador to Washington Raul Rabe, who is representing Carpentier.

Paredes said he merely announced the purpose of his visit to the accused, but did not really converse with them during his visit.

'Temporary duty status'

In a statement, the US Embassy said it welcomed the visit as an opportunity for the Philippine government "to verify that the accused remain in US custody."

"They (the accused) are restricted to quarters and they have no official working role at the US Embassy," it said.

The INQUIRER reported last Dec. 30 that the four Marines were on "temporary duty status" at the Joint US Military Assistance Group or Jusmag, another office in the embassy compound. The information was provided by an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs' legal division.

Lussenhop yesterday explained that putting the accused under such a status was just "an administrative, bureaucratic" matter stemming from the fact that they were not permanently stationed in the Philippines,

Paredes, a former military officer, said that giving the four accused Marines temporary duty status carried no specific task, and that the designation may only be "on paper."

In the statement, the embassy reiterated the US government's position that "the terms of the VFA allow for the accused to remain in US custody until the end of judicial proceedings."

"As called for in the VFA, the US is taking the government of the Philippines' request for custody of the accused into full account," it added, referring to the diplomatic note sent by the Department of Foreign Affairs last Nov. 16.

But Lussenhop clarified that the statement was mainly to announce Paredes' visit and should not be taken as already representing the US government's formal reply to the Nov. 16 request.

He said the US Department of State in Washington had "no answer yet" on the issue.

'No intimidation'

In a petition filed yesterday by his counsel, the Roberto Berenguer & Guno Law Office, Carpentier asked the Department of Justice to reverse and set aside the ruling that included his name in the rape complaint filed in the Olongapo City Regional Trial Court.

Carpentier said there was no clear indication that "intimidation" was used to rape the 22-year-old complainant.

He said that "the prosecutors misread the medicolegal certificate" and that there was "no evidence to show that force or intimidation was employed" in the incident. *With a report from Armand N. Nocum*

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

A BIRD flies over the Evros river delta, northeastern Greece, near the Greek-Turkish borders, Jan. 11. The deadly H5N1 flu strain has infected 15 people in neighboring Turkey, including two children who have died, according to preliminary tests. AP

Threat of bird flu pandemic growing daily, WHO warns

Turkey fights on to stop outbreaks in people, poultry

ANKARA—THE THREAT OF A BIRD FLU PANDEMIC IS GROWING daily, a top World Health Organization (WHO) official said on Thursday, as Turkish officials stepped up efforts to halt outbreaks in people and poultry.

Shigeru Omi, the WHO's regional director for the Western Pacific, said Asia was still the epicenter of the threat to global health but that a pandemic was not inevitable if countries and health bodies responded quickly.

"As the new cases of human infection with the H5N1 virus in Turkey show, the situation is worsening with each passing month and the threat of an influenza pandemic is continuing to grow every day," he told a two-day meeting of Asian countries and international organizations on bird flu in Tokyo.

Experts say the H5N1 virus could become more active in the colder months in affected regions, and spread in east Asia as people slaughter chickens for Lunar New Year celebrations.

The more it becomes entrenched in poultry flocks, the greater the risk that more humans will become infected. So far, the virus is reported to have infected about 150 people, killing 78 of them in six countries.

Indonesia said on Thursday a 29-year-old woman who had bird flu, according to a local test result, had died.

While it remains essentially a disease in birds, scientists fear the virus could mutate into a form that could spread easily between humans, causing a pandemic in which millions could die.

While there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission in Turkey, the large and rapid rise in the number of cases has worried experts.

The H5N1 virus has been found in wild birds and poultry in a third of Turkish provinces: It has killed at least two children and infected more than a dozen people in little more than a week.

"The pace of fatalities appears to have fallen off quickly.

But it is as yet unclear whether this is because the virus has modified or Turkey's approach has been successful," David Nabarro, the UN's senior coordinator for avian influenza, said on Wednesday.

He also said the virus appeared to be spreading via wild birds.

"It does look as though it is the work of migrating birds.

But once in an area, it spreads locally," leading to occasional human infections, he said.

The WHO says countries must do more to prepare for a pandemic and Nabarro said it would cost international donors about $1.4 billion to finance the next phase of the global campaign against the virus. This included gearing up veterinary services and preparing expert teams for quick deployment to outbreaks.

He was confident delegates to next week's bird flu conference in Beijing would pledge the needed amount.

The virus has rapidly infected birds across Turkey, including Ankara, Istanbul and the tourism region near the Aegean coast. Authorities, criticized for an initial slow response, have killed more than 300,000 birds.

Nabarro cautioned against mass vaccination of poultry.

"This is done as a secondary step, when initial measures fail to stem the disease's spread. When a bird is vaccinated, it can still get infected, but just have a lower virus load, so it can still be a carrier while escaping detection."

Turkish officials have been stressing that relatively few people there have died, compared to Asia, where H5N1 has had about a 50-percent mortality rate. *Reuters*

US opens Alaska area to oil drilling

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA—THE US government paved the way on Wednesday for oil drilling in an Alaskan region used by migrating caribou and birds, three weeks after Congress blocked energy development in the nearby Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The interior department gave final approval to develop the Teshekpuk Lake region, setting up an oil-lease sale in September. The decision came a year after the Bureau of Land Management recommended drilling in the region, which lies west of the wildlife refuge on Alaska's North Slope.

Teshekpuk's 389,000 acres had been protected from oil exploration since the Reagan Administration. In 1998, when former President Bill Clinton opened some areas of the North Slope to the oil industry, the Teshekpuk Lake area was kept off-limits.

The Arctic wildlife refuge, or ANWR, is 19.6 million acres, about 50 times larger than the Teshekpuk Lake region. The US Senate last month once again blocked attempts to open ANWR to drilling.

The lake is the biological "heart" of the region, said Dora Nukapigak, a resident of the Inupiat village of Nuiqsut, the community closest to Teshekpuk Lake. The lake is about 80 miles east of Point Barrow, Alaska's northernmost point.

"It's our garden. It's where we gather our food," Nukapigak said.

Advocates say the region is a source for oil and natural gas needed by the United States.

Drilling in the region would bring more companies to Alaska, said Judy Brady, executive director of the Alaska Oil and Gas Association. "We're very excited about that."

The Bureau of Land Management recommended drilling near Lake Teshekpuk a year ago and says there are about 1.5 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

If an oil lease sale is held next September, it could lead to oil drilling as soon as the winter of 2007-08.

With ANWR closed to exploration, the oil industry is likely to be attracted to the new opportunity in what is part of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, said Henri Bisson, Bureau of Land Management director for Alaska. *Reuters*

Rebuilding plans for New Orleans call for smaller city

NEW ORLEANS—NEW ORLEANS OFFICIALS on Wednesday unveiled a controversial recovery plan giving residents four months to prove they will rebuild in the devastated city before their neighborhoods could be declared off-limits to redevelopment.

The plan calls for a much smaller city, estimating just half of the 500,000 people who lived there before Hurricane Katrina struck on Aug. 29 will return in the next two years.

It proposes residents and experts form planning teams for each neighborhood that will decide by May 20 on the fate of those most heavily damaged by the storm and the flooding that followed. It was designed by the urban-planning panel of the Bring Back New Orleans Commission appointed by Mayor Ray Nagin.

For a neighborhood to be ruled viable, half the residents should commit to come back, the commission proposed as a guideline. Until decisions are made, a moratorium will be placed on rebuilding in badly damaged sections such as New Orleans East, the waterfront Lakeview and the poverty-stricken Lower Ninth Ward.

The proposal drew loud "boos" and shouts of anger from residents who crowded a downtown hotel meeting room for its announcement.

"I'm ready to rebuild. I'm not going to let you take everything. I'm ready to fight to get my property together," one man shouted from the back of the room.

Carolyn Parker, a resident of the ruined Lower Ninth, told the panel: "I don't think it's right that you try to take my property.

"Over my dead body," she said. "I didn't die with Katrina."

If a neighborhood is not deemed habitable, or too few residents return, the city could ban redevelopment and turn it into a park or open space. Property owners could be compensated in a proposed federal buyback program that would provide 100 percent of their homes' pre-storm value. *Reuters*

Israel political truce ends as Sharon remains stable

JERUSALEM—ISRAELI POLITICS WAS to resume in earnest Thursday with internal party ballots for a March general election as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon remained "serious but stable" after a massive stroke.

Doctors have expressed amazement at the 77-year-old leader's powers of recovery and a series of upbeat medical reports from the Jerusalem hospital where he is in intensive care have sunk a brief truce in electioneering.

Four Cabinet ministers from Sharon's old right-wing party have agreed to resign on Sunday after their party leader Benjamin Netanyahu, a former premier and Sharon's arch rival, launched a vitriolic attack on the caretaker government.

Netanyahu had asked ministers to resign on Thursday as the party holds its primaries for the March 28 general election in order not to have to implement the policies of acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

But Agriculture Minister Israel Katz, Education Minister Limor Livnat, Health Minister Danny Naveh and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom were reluctant to quit before a party vote likely to see hardliners seal their grip on Likud.

The party, which has been in crisis since Sharon jumped ship to create his new centrist movement Kadima six weeks before his stroke, is at loggerheads with Olmert, who was one of the first from Likud to defect to Kadima.

In addition to Likud, the centrist Shinui party, and the ultra-right-wing National Religious Party and National Union were all set to elect their candidates for the March election later Thursday. *AFP*

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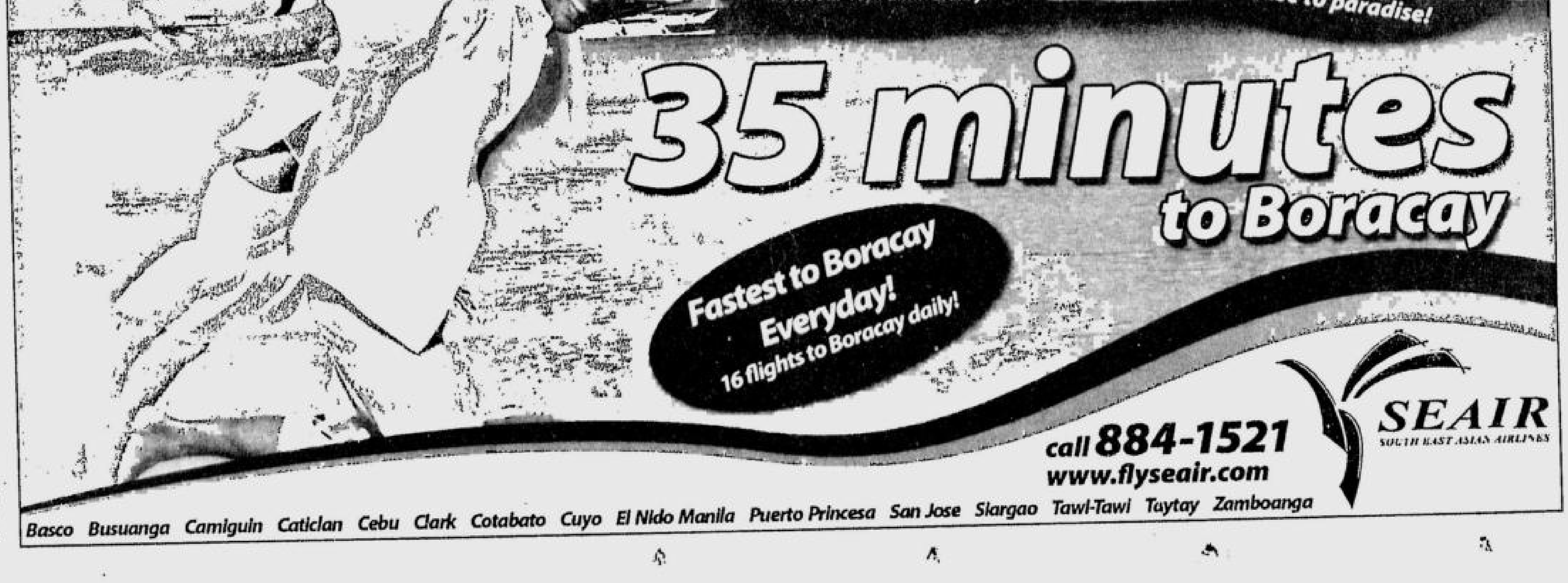

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World powers threaten Iran with sanctions

VIENNA—WORLD POWERS threatened Iran with UN Security Council action Wednesday, but a defiant Tehran vowed to press ahead with sensitive nuclear research.

The British, French and German foreign ministers were to hold a meeting Thursday in Berlin to discuss a response. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Iran would "likely" be referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

The three European Union countries have been seeking a negotiated solution with Tehran for two years.

Iran caused renewed controversy on Tuesday when it broke the UN seals at its Natanz nuclear plant in order to resume research into uranium enrichment.

There was a furious reaction from the United States and the European Union which fear Tehran is trying to develop atomic weapons. Iran insists its program is for civilian purposes.

Enriched uranium used by some nuclear power stations is also an essential element of atomic weapons.

In Washington, Vice President Dick Cheney said referral to the UN Security Council would be the probable next step.

"What would be probably the number one item on the agenda would be the resolution that could be enforced by sanctions, were they (the Iranians) to fail to comply with it," Cheney said in a US radio interview.

State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack said: "It is more likely than ever that we are headed to the (UN) Security Council on this question."

McCormack said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice conferred Wednesday by phone with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and also with Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was "very concerned" over Iran's activity, but added that it was up to the IAEA to deal with the issue, according to spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

Annan was "very appreciative" of the efforts of the EU-3 and Russia to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, Dujarric said, but felt that "at this point" the IAEA and the the EU members "remain clearly in the lead in this situation."

Referral to the UN Security Council normally pass through the IAEA.

Even Russia, a frequent ally of Iran, highlighted its concern at Iran's latest nuclear action.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called the breaking of the seals a "cause for concern," while Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said the move "personally disappoints me and gives some cause for alarm."

Rice spoke Tuesday with Lavrov, whose country has offered to house Iranian uranium-enrichment activities on its own soil as a control and confidence-building measure.

US officials had privately made no secret of their skepticism over the EU's negotiating efforts, but now appear convinced that Washington's tactic of letting the talks run their course has borne fruit in highlighting Tehran's intransigence.

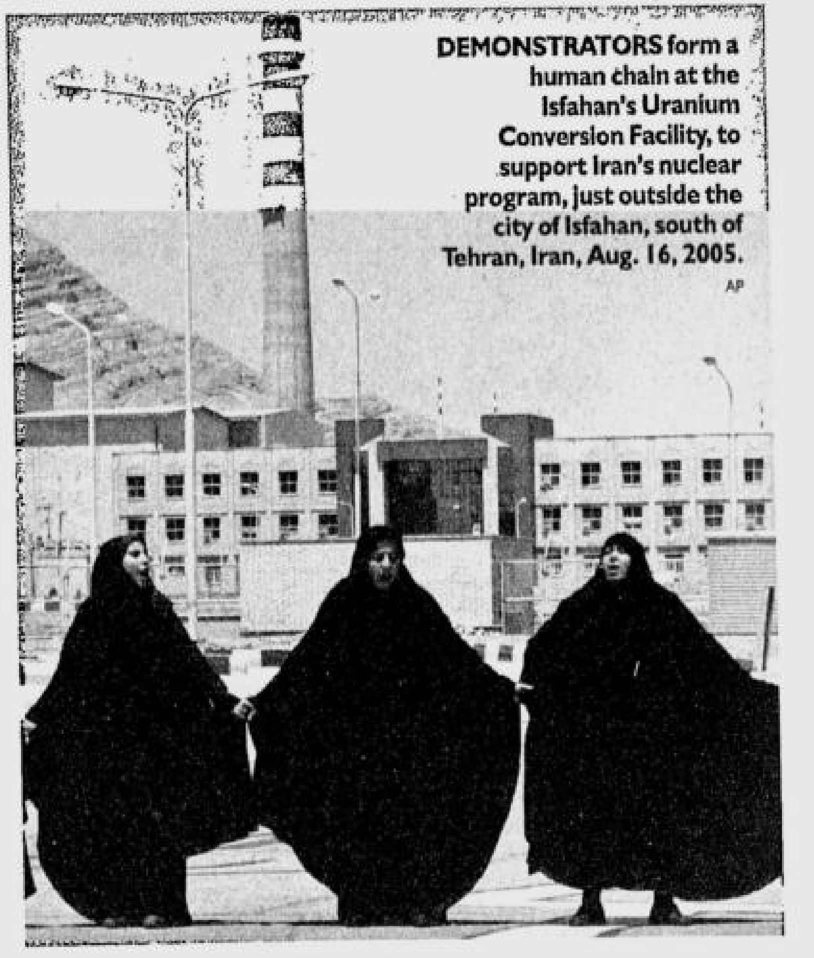
A Western diplomat in Vienna said there was talk of a special board meeting of IAEA governors in about two weeks.

US diplomats insist they have a majority of votes on the 35-member IAEA board to haul Iran before the Security Council, but it was unclear whether there was enough support for sanctions against Tehran.

In Iran, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed not to be intimidated by the "fuss" and said he hoped atomic energy would soon "serve the progress" of the country.

"I am telling all the powers that the Iranian nation and government, with firmness and wisdom, will continue its path in seeking and utilizing peaceful nuclear energy," he told supporters in the southern city of Bandar Abbas.

"In the path of nuclear energy, we have started (nuclear fuel) research and God willing, in the near future this energy in its entirety will serve the Iranian nation."



DEMONSTRATORS form a human chain at the Isfahan's Uranium Conversion Facility, to support Iran's nuclear program, just outside the city of Isfahan, south of Tehran, Iran, Aug. 16, 2005. AP

Former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, now head of Iran's top political arbitration body, was even more forthright.

"With wisdom we will get our rights, and if they create any trouble for us, they will regret it in the end and Iran will emerge triumphant," he said.

The crisis has hit world energy markets: Light sweet crude for delivery in February hit a high for the day in New York trading of $64.80 a barrel before closing at $63.94, up 57 cents.

"I do think that the continued deterioration of the situation in Iran is having some impact on the market," AG Edwards analyst Bill O'Grady said.

In London, the price of Brent North Sea crude also for February delivery was up 25 cents to $62.17 a barrel. *AFP*

Biggest polluters pledge to put growth before Kyoto

SYDNEY—SOME OF THE world's worst polluting nations pledged new tactics to fight global warming Thursday, but said they would not sacrifice economic growth while trying to cut back on greenhouse gases.

The strategy was outlined at the end of a two-day conference here bringing ministers from the United States, Australia, Japan, China, India and South Korea together with more than 100 top executives from big business.

The six nations of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate said at the end of their inaugural meeting that "at the core of (our) vision is our conviction of the urgent need to pursue development and poverty eradication.

"By working together we will be better able to meet our increased energy needs and associated challenges, including those related to air pollution, energy security and greenhouse gas intensity."

The six countries account for almost half of the world's gross domestic product, population, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientists blame greenhouse gases, produced mainly by the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil, for causing rising temperatures worldwide.

The group said while it recognized renewable energy and nuclear power would represent an increasing share of global energy supply, there would be no reduction in the use of fossil fuels.

"We recognized that fossil fuels underpin our economies, and will be an enduring reality for our lifetimes and beyond," the six nations said in a statement.

"It is therefore critical that we work together to develop, demonstrate and implement cleaner and lower emissions technologies that allow for the continued economic use of fossil fuels while addressing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions."

Australian Prime Minister John Howard told the conference "the idea that we can address climate-change matters successfully at the expense of economic growth is not only unrealistic but also unacceptable."

Howard pledged an additional 100 million dollars ($75 million) for green projects over the next five years, with five million going to the partnership.

US Energy Secretary Sam Bodman said President George W. Bush had agreed to contribute 52 million to the partnership in the US budget for 2007.

Critics have charged that the conference was a smokescreen designed to divert attention from the US and Australian refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, which commits developed countries to reducing greenhouse gas pollution.

The US accounts for 25 percent of carbon emissions while Australia produces more carbon dioxide per person than any other country, but they say the Kyoto pact is unfair as it does not commit developing nations to reducing emissions.

Greenpeace energy campaigner Catherine Fitzpatrick said the new agreement was more of a trade pact than an environmental solution.

"The short-term interests of the fossil fuel sector have been put ahead of the long-term health and welfare of ordinary people," she said. *AFP*

Climate-change fungus wiping out frogs, says study

LONDON—AN INFECTIOUS FUNgus aggravated by global warming has killed entire populations of frogs in Central and South America and driven some species to extinction, scientists said on Wednesday.

In research that showed the effects of rising temperatures on delicate ecosystems, a team of researchers found that a warming atmosphere encouraged the spread of a fungus that has wiped out species of harlequin frogs and golden toads.

"This is the first clear evidence that widespread extinction is taking place because of global warming," Dr. Alan Pounds, an ecologist of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve in Costa Rica, said in an interview.

"Climate change is already altering the dynamics of infectious disease and causing species to disappear."

Pounds and his team established the link between global warming and the disappearance of frogs in the cloud forests of Costa Rica by analyzing sea surface and air temperatures, which rose by 0.18 degrees per decade between 1975 and 2000.

Warmer temperatures increased cloud cover over the tropical mountain which the scientists believe promoted conditions to spur the growth of the chytrid fungus that kills frogs.

They are confident that global warming is a key factor in the disappearance of many amphibian populations in tropical forests.

"There is absolutely a linkage between global warming and this disease—they go hand-in-hand," said Dr. Arturo Sanchez-Azofeifa, of Canada's University of Alberta and a co-author of the research published in the journal Nature. *Reuters*

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85 dead so far in hajj 'stoning the devil' rite

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA—More than 85 Muslim pilgrims were trampled to death Thursday as they tripped over luggage in a scramble to hurl pebbles at symbols of Satan during the annual pilgrimage, Saudi officials said.

It was the latest in a succession of stampede tragedies to hit the hajj pilgrimage despite efforts by Saudi authorities to avoid a repeat of disasters like the one that killed 1,426 people in 1990.

"The number of killed has exceeded 85 and the figure is expected to rise because there are dozens of victims who have not been transported to hospitals yet," a medical source told AFP.

"Many of the bodies brought to hospital are from Southeast Asian countries," the source added.

The Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya news channel showed footage of the bodies of dozens of pilgrims laying on the ground, covered with white shrouds.

Interior ministry spokesperson Mansur Al-Turki confirmed to AFP that "there is a large number of deaths ... but we cannot give (exact) numbers now because rescue teams are still evacuating the area."

He said the accident occurred "because of the luggage that fell and led to a rush at the eastern entrance of the Jamarat bridge," where the pilgrims stone three pillars symbolizing the devil in the valley of Mina, east of the holy city of Mecca.

Adel Zamzami, head of civil defense forces in western Saudi Arabia, said: "There is an accident at the beginning of the bridge of Jamarat. We have a number of casualties and injuries. The (exact) number is not known yet."

One Egyptian pilgrim on the scene told AFP: "Just when we went to throw the stones, I saw a huge rush and pilgrims falling under the feet of thousands of other pilgrims."

"I don't know how many people died but I know that it is in the dozens," he said.

Tareq al-Arnus, head of emergency operations at the Ministry of Health who was at the scene at the time of the accident, told AFP: "It is too early to give a toll. Ambulances and emergency crews are on the scene, trying to deal with it."

The stoning of Satan is the riskiest part of the hajj as pilgrims jostle to make sure their pebbles touch the pillar, with the weaker ones at risk of being trampled by the masses.

A total of 251 Muslim pilgrims were trampled to death in the 2004 hajj as people panicked during the ritual stoning.

In 2003, 14 pilgrims, including six women, were killed in a stampede during the first day of the stoning ritual, and 35 died in 2001, while in 1998 the hajj saw 118 killed and more than 180 hurt at Mina.

The deadliest toll of the pilgrimage was in July 1990 when 1,426 pilgrims were trampled or asphyxiated to death in a stampede in a tunnel, also in Mina. *AFP*

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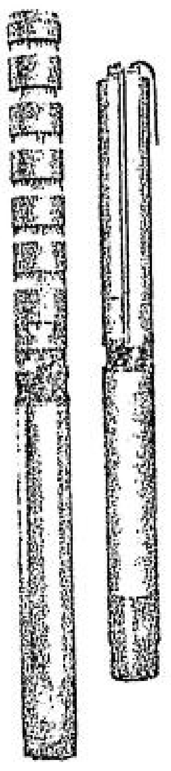
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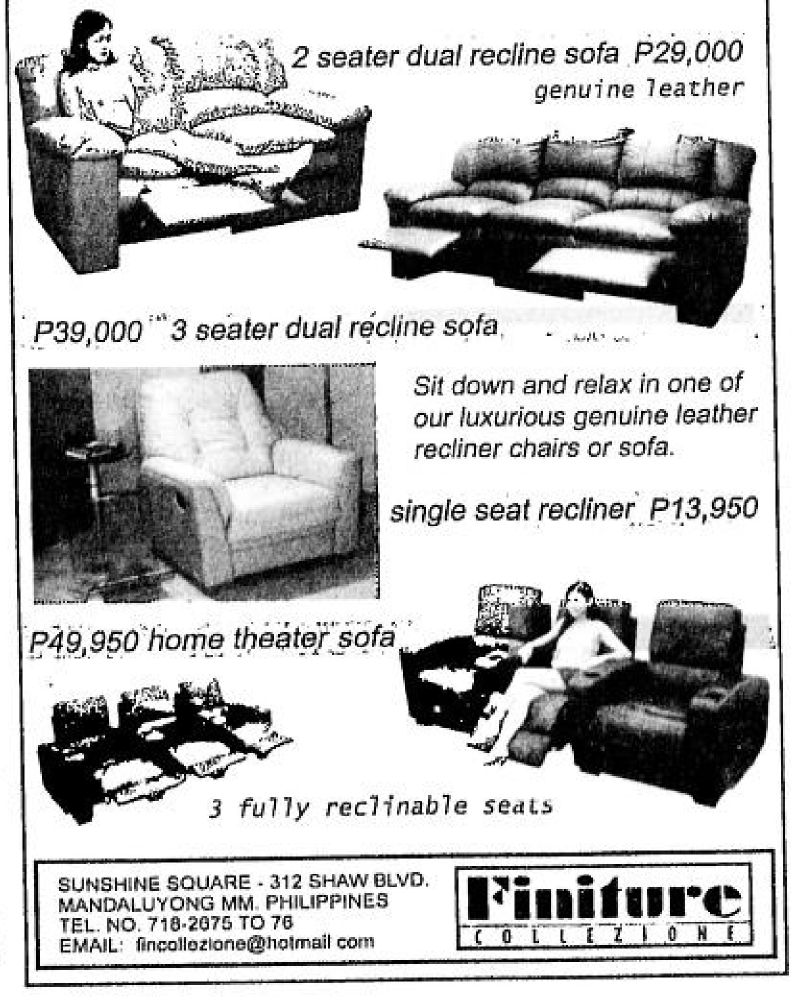
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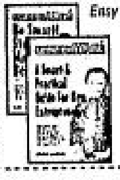
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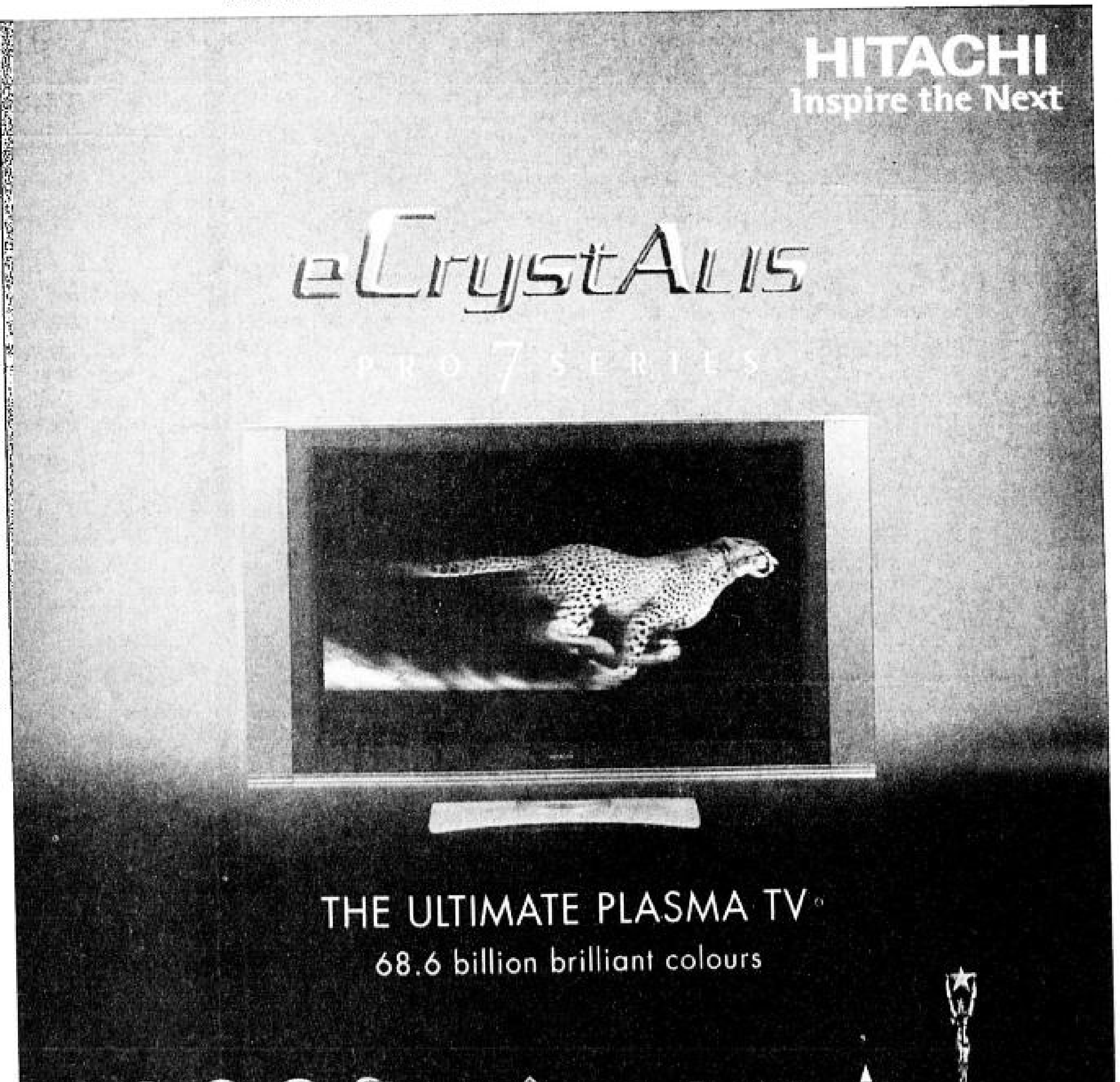
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OPINION

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False modesty

EDITORIAL

SAID THE PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL ADVISER, Gabby Claudio: "So what is there to back out from? Our position has always been to refer this to Congress."

Claudio was referring, of course, to the Constitutional Consultative Commission's controversial suggestion to scrap the 2007 elections. His statement came after a meeting in Malacañang in which President Macapagal-Arroyo tried to soothe the feelings of former President Fidel V. Ramos. The President quite cleverly mollified the disgruntled Ramos by saying that she would throw the questions about her continuation in office and the elimination of the 2007 polls to their party, Lakas-CMD, and Congress. What could be more statesmanlike, patriotic and democratic than that? What could be more becoming, more presidential and reasonable?

The problem was that the meeting was noticeable for the absence of Speaker Jose de Venecia. Together with Ms Arroyo and Ramos, De Venecia is the third person in the trinity that rules the ruling party. The Speaker, for one, has made it quite clear that he is foursquare behind the President, and that includes keeping her in office until 2010 and doing away with the 2007 polls. Ramos, on the other hand, has always relied on De Venecia to be the whip that keeps the unruly herd, that is Lakas, going in the direction he wants. If De Venecia now says his real chief is the President, then where does that leave Ramos? Poised for a humiliation, perhaps.

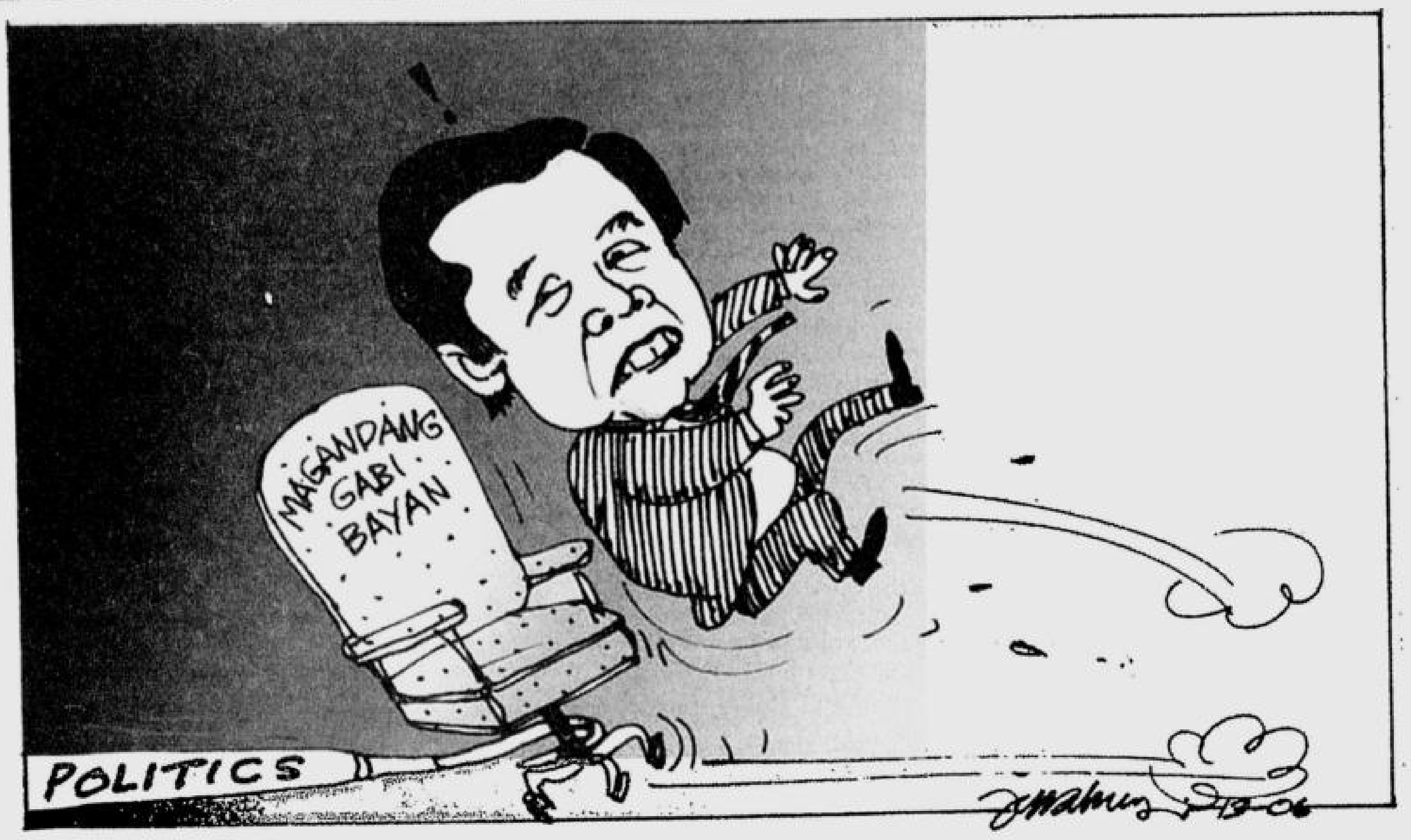
The good-cop-bad-cop act has been perfected by the administration, and no one, not even "senior advisers" to the President like Ramos, are exempt from being subjected to that act. The President always finds someone to be designated the good cop: reasonable, ever-willing to compromise. And she always finds someone to be the bad cop: confrontational, uncompromising. To borrow another analogy, she has mastered the strategy of being the chief resident who makes crazy people responsible for security, only to shrug when the lunatics eventually take over the asylum. Then she can say, thank God the one nominally in charge isn't a crazy person (we must never underestimate the President's oft-quoted personal hotline to God, regardless of Archbishop Oscar Cruz's witty observation that those claiming to a divine dialogue are quite possibly schizophrenic).

There is no shortage of officials dying for a chance to play bad cop to the President's good cop. There seems to be no shortage of reputedly clever politicians who keep falling for the act, either. On the eve of a major meeting of the Lakas-CMD, Fidel Ramos has fallen for an old trick: and though he may be proud of his muscles, he is no Popeye to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Bluto.

Lakas-CMD is not just the ruling party, but also, the party that controls the House of Representatives and most of the country's local government positions: the people who have more to gain from maintaining the status quo. Any changes to the current order of things, if they are to be appetizing to the party, have to result in what we can euphemistically describe as a positive balance sheet. Those changes are precisely what the Speaker has said he favors: canceling elections next year, and keeping the President in office.

But can we predict, as events seem to suggest, that after the President's (and her people's) comforting statements, Lakas will now rebel and demand the retention of the President and the elimination of next year's polls? With a fair amount of confidence, we can. No one enters into such a large meeting without ensuring a genuine debate will be prevented. The votes in the Lakas meeting, like the votes for impeachment, have been tallied and found agreeable to whatever the presidency desires. What's more, the President and her people, in ringing tones, have announced that democracy is the way to go: and regardless of how guided that democracy is, the fact is the party will announce what it wants.

It wants four more years of Ms Arroyo. It wants no elections next year. What it wants, it should get. After all, what are they in power for? As Benjamin Franklin once wrote, God helps those who help themselves. To which the President and her party can only say amen.



A third proposal for a new CTPL system

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

SEVERAL COLUMNS AGO, WE DISCUSSED the controversial Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) insurance program for privately owned motor vehicles which is saddled with so many loopholes that result in tax losses and in accident victims not being paid their insurance claims.

Under existing laws, a private vehicle won't be registered by the Land Transportation Office (LTO) unless it has a CTPL insurance policy. This policy will pay for death or injuries to third party victims of accidents (but not the owners or drivers of the vehicles involved in the accident).

The CTPL insurance program is a P2.7-billion industry, with 4.7 million registered vehicles paying an average premium of P600 annually. The number of vehicles increases by an average of 10 percent every year. So you can see that there is plenty of money to be earned from the business.

After a few false starts, the CTPL program was finally thrown open to all insurance companies. Competition and predatory pricing were so stiff that a lot of irregularities cropped up. Many fly-by-night insurance companies mushroomed and issued fake policies and certificates of cover (COCs) so that when accident victims filed claims on these policies, they found out that they had no policies at all. Records show that fully 60 percent of all registered motor vehicles have fake, duplicate or spurious COCs. Furthermore, no taxes on the premiums were paid to the government on these fake policies. Records of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Insurance Commission show that only 48 percent in premiums is reported and is taxed. The remaining P1.4 billion is unreported and untaxed. Less than that, or P1.3 billion in premiums, is collected and is taxed. The CTPL program has been in force for the last 25 years, so you can imagine how much revenue the government has already lost.

To correct this, the Insurance Commission, the insurance companies themselves and the state-owned Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) have proposed different systems to replace the existing one.

The Insurance Commission and the insurance companies proposed a "clearing house" for all insurance firms and their policies. Payment of premiums will be to banks which would remit the taxes to the government. The "clearing house" will be managed by a private (and as yet unknown) group and will get 40 percent of the premiums.

The GSIS proposed to insure all private vehicles, as it is already doing successfully with government-owned vehicles. It would then reinsure the policies with reputable insurance companies, but it would assume quick payment (from 5 to 6 days) to claimants. Premiums will be incorporated into the LTO receipt and the owner does not have to show any policy or COC when making claims as the GSIS computers are hooked up to those of the LTO. This will save the owner time and effort in registering his vehicle and making claims.

After that column came out, we received another proposal from a third (also unknown) group. This group proposes a management turnkey solution that will run the whole CTPL system from start to finish. It will insure all private vehicles, will have offices in all LTO branches, and issue collective CTPL policies for all member insurance companies. Instead of different insurance companies having offices at the LTO district offices, the management company will have a single point of sale at the LTO offices, thereby eliminating the cost that comes from maintaining such private insurance offices.

With the single point of sale and issuance of a collective policy, an equitable distribution of the market is guaranteed since the management company will deposit the revenues collected from the issuance of the policies with a designated bank. The bank then equitably distributes the premiums to all member insurance companies. No more need of selling by individual insurance companies as this is done for them by the management company.

This will eliminate cutthroat competition as each company will get an equal share of the premium, regardless of which agent endorses the client to the management company. The agent will still be entitled to the 10 percent commission. Predatory pricing will also be eliminated as companies no longer need to resort to lowering of premiums just to get market share.

Like the GSIS, the management company will have its computer linked to that of the LTO. This will eliminate fake, duplicate and spurious COCs. The management company will put up an authenticating system for the COCs to ensure that an authentic policy will be used only once with only one vehicle when registered. This will allow the management company to collect the previously uncollected P1.4 billion in premiums.

Collection of taxes is assured since the designated bank will segregate and remit the proper taxes to the government. There will also be complete audit records.

Unpaid claims due to fake and spurious policies will be a thing of the past as the management company will maintain and manage a claims fund with the designated bank. The claims department will be handled by professional licensed adjusters. And to ensure transparency, a representative/representatives of insurance companies will be made members of the claims committee.

There are two things missing in the copy of the proposal handed to me: It does not say who will compose the management company and how much its cut of the premiums will be.

People's initiative: Why the spunk?

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

THE SUPREME COURT HAS TWICE REJECTED attempts to revise the Constitution via direct initiative, yet Charter change proponents insist adamantly that if the Senate blocks them, they will "go straight to the people."

Why the audacity? Either they do not understand how our legal order works, or they know it too well and think they can pull it off this time around.

When governors and mayors say they will force the government to listen to the people, they actually invoke the lofty promises of our People Power-inspired Constitution. The drafters "institutionalized" Edsa I through the people's power of recall, initiative and referendum. For instance, if Congress refuses to amend the charter or call for a constitutional convention, the people directly can initiate a plebiscite to approve amendments. All they need is a petition signed by at least 12 percent of the registered voters, and of those, at least 3 percent from each legislative district.

What they conveniently leave out is that in 1997, this was actually attempted by an organization named the People's Initiative for Reforms, Modernization and Action (or Pirma)—and twice, the Supreme Court rejected the attempt. At that time, Fidel V. Ramos' six-year term as president was about to end in 1998, and Pirma asked the Comelec to establish "signing stations" and schedule the "signature gathering."

The Supreme Court, through then Justice Hilario Davide, stopped the Comelec, and held that Pirma had erred. What they should file with the Comelec is a petition already bearing the requisite signatures. Until then, there is no "direct initiative" that can be acted upon by the Comelec, and the Court was unanimous on this point.

However, Davide added a supporting argument that would later prove to be decisive. The Constitution expressly says that direct initiative was "subject finally to implementing legislation by Congress," and Davide found the Initiative Law "incomplete, inadequate and wanting." On this dictum, the Court was divided.

Justice Reynato Puno and five other justices dissented against this "strained interpretation." We must not "refuse to effectuate the intent of a law on the ground that it is badly written [because after all,] our laws are not always written in impeccable English." Then Justice Artemio Panganiban, while agreeing with Davide that Pirma needed to show the needed signatures, found his additional dictum "all too sweeping and all too extremist...equivalent...to killing the patient to relieve him of pain. …. We should not preempt any future effort to exercise [direct initiative] correctly and judiciously. [T]here is a right way to do the right thing at the right time and for the right reason."

But Pirma did not give up too easily. It proceeded to do what the Court said it had to do, namely, gather the signatures. It showed up with almost six million signatures, or 15.9 percent of the voters nationwide, but was spurned by the Comelec. It asked the Court to compel the Comelec to verify the signatures and submit their amendments for the people's approval in a plebiscite. The Court refused, and stood on a clear point of law. How could the Comelec be in grave abuse of discretion, when it was merely keeping faith with the Court's decision in the first Pirma decision?

What is instructive for us today, however, is the reasoning by the justices. Justice Kapunan recognized the irony of our post-Marcos Constitution. We installed "safeguards [against] a repetition of the abuses of power," like term limits and people's initiative, and it is "ironic" that the people's initiative is now used to defeat term limits. On the recurring argument "let the people decide," he said: "[T]his idea [is] seductive and beguiling in its simplicity because it glosses over the nature of [our democracy while] cloaking its adherents in sanctimonious populist garb."

Justice Davide described it as a "farce surrounding a demand disguised as that of the people" and warned about the Court "allowing itself to be used as a legitimizing tool for those who wish to perpetuate themselves in power."

The local officials seem cocky that they have the numbers. It seems that they are now gathering the signatures. (In Evardone v. Comelec, where a direct initiative was invoked to recall a local official, a petition signed only by three people was scheduled by the Comelec for signing despite a stop-order from the Court, and the Court still upheld the results because the sovereign had already spoken.)

The scenario is that they will present the Comelec with a fait accompli. Presented with the signatures, either the Comelec will have the gumption to grant the petition, and provoke a constitutional showdown before the Court or it will dutifully spurn the signatures following the Pirma rulings, and the petitioning local officials will then go to the Supreme Court just the same.

Either way, Charter change proponents apparently hope that the Court will have a change of heart. Only Panganiban and Puno remain from the original Pirma court, and both dissented and held that the Initiative Law was valid. (Note that, in the second Pirma decision, Panganiban added that it could be used only for minor amendments, not for major revisions.)

Of course, Congress can simply pass a new Initiative Law altogether. But remember that GMA has a de facto June 2006 deadline, and needs to have a new charter in place before the one-year bar on impeachment lapses. Thus, this bold scenario in constitutional brinkmanship.

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Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com

Signs of the times

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE RULING LAKAS-CHRISTIAN MUSLIM Democrats (CMD) coalition meets in caucus tomorrow amid signs that the mood of the nation is changing dramatically over the issue of constitutional revision. It would be fatal for the coalition, as well as for the opposition that is seeking to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo before 2010, to ignore these signs.

Among these signs are the opinion polls taken last month, finding that: (1) 54 percent of respondents approved of President Arroyo's stepping down from office before the end of her term; and (2) Filipinos are split three ways on the issue of whether they want the head of government elected by members of parliament rather than directly by voters.

The first finding emerged after intensified public debate on the call, made particularly by former President Fidel Ramos, since last July for the President to make a "graceful exit" by cutting short her term through the shift to a parliamentary system in 2007. This suggests that the shift as an option to solve the legitimacy crisis engulfing the Arroyo government has been catching fire. The survey, taken by the Social Weather Stations from Nov. 27 to Dec. 4 last year, found that 54 percent of Filipinos approved of the Ramos proposal for her to step down before 2010.

Filipinos are now more receptive to a change in the mode of election than in the past, which showed a stronger inclination to stay with the direct election of the president under the presidential system. The survey found 32 percent of Filipinos approved of the election of the head of government by MPs, while 32 percent disapproved and 30 percent were undecided. "This split-opinion result is a marked change from previous SWS polls which showed a great reluctance of Filipino voters to give up the tradition of voting directly for the president," the SWS said.

These findings are among indications of an emerging mood of change across the nation as a result of the crisis that has not only tarnished the legitimacy of the Arroyo government over allegations of rigging the 2004 elections, but has also cast a critical spotlight on the flaws of the presidential system as a fertile ground for executive-legislative stalemate.

These symptoms of the changing public mood overhang the nation as the Lakas-CMD caucus faces the urgent task of avoiding a disastrous confrontation between the President and Ramos over the deadline he gave the President for a calibrated exit until June 2007, to make way for the shift to the parliamentary system and over the controversial proposal of the Consultative Commission to scrap the 2007 elections, which would allow the President to stay in office until 2010.

The caucus also puts to test the cohesion of the coalition and shows whether or not it is a paper tiger. It will also test the strength of the President, the titular party leader, and Ramos, the party's chair emeritus.

While there are signs of change in the public mood, the ruling coalition and the institutional and official opposition face the risk of being overtaken by swiftly moving events, especially over the issue of constitutional change.

Constitutional change has swept aside the issues that provoked the current crisis: the tapes that bolstered the allegations of the enemies of the Arroyo regime that it had rigged the 2004 elections and gave them the ammunition to press for her summary resignation.

The political opposition must recast its strategy and rewrite its script to unseat the regime, after its drive over the past six months failed. The street-driven movement has lost momentum, and the move to impeach the President last September was crushed by the Lakas majority in the House of Representatives.

Unless the opposition and regime opponents recognize that the issue has shifted from the streets to the area of constitutional change, i.e., the shift to the parliamentary system, they are going to be rendered irrelevant and marginalized. They, including the hyperactive civil society militants, are now caught in the quicksand of failed strategies.

In taking advantage of the pressure being exerted by Ramos on the President to take the option of exiting by 2007 under the cover of the shift to the parliamentary system, the opposition exhibited a disappointing insensitivity to the mood of change and has been left behind by the current of change.

Its response to the fissures in the ruling coalition is to revive the impeachment complaint against the President this year. According to press reports, the opposition has not repackaged the dismissed complaint with additional allegations. This means the opposition is trying to reopen its campaign to unseat the President in the parliamentary arena where it is disadvantaged by the numbers of the ruling coalition. It refuses to do combat in the arena of constitutional change, where the decisive battle on the fate of the Arroyo government is shaping up.

The real issue now is over the plan to scrap the 2007 elections. The crisis of legitimacy grew out of the controversy over the Garcillano tapes which put into question the legitimacy of the 2004 elections. This alone makes a case for the holding of fresh elections in 2007 under a parliamentary system that will allow a sweeping revamp of elected officials from the chief executive down to senators, congressmen, mayors and governors. This clean sweep offers the most promising option for bringing closure to the crisis of 2005 and the issue of legitimacy of the Arroyo government.

Finding all children

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"EXCLUDED AND INVISIBLE" CHILDREN ARE the focus of this year's "The State of the World's Children" report prepared annually by Unicef. Though the world's governments have committed to meet concrete, time-bound goals related to health, education and welfare of their citizens through the Millennium Development Goals, commitments which are currently faltering in many parts of the globe, Unicef says that for millions of children, life remains "a daily struggle to survive."

Says the report: "Whether they live in urban centres or rural outposts, they risk missing out on their childhood—excluded from essential services such as hospitals and schools, lacking the protection of family and community, often at risk of exploitation and abuse. For these children, childhood as a time to grow, learn, play and feel safe is, in effect, meaningless."

The Unicef report emphasizes the role of effective partnerships between and among government agencies, nongovernment organizations, community groups and children and children's advocates. Putting children first, says the UN agency, pays off not just in such concrete terms as improved infant- and child-survival rates, better access to education and healthier children, but also in terms of overall development, since a healthier citizenry almost always translates into a more robust economy and more vibrant democracy.

That this needs to be articulated and emphasized at all seems not only uncanny but unnecessary. But if only to call the public's attention once more to the important place of children in our nation's lives, here are excerpts from the conclusion of this year's "State of the World's Children" report.

* * *

LET us consider a scenario—one in which the world has gone that extra mile to ensure that children, regardless of the country in which they live, their household income, gender, ethnicity or location, have access to essential services and are protected. Countries have made the efforts to reach the last 5 or 10 percent of children who had been excluded or invisible and are, in many cases, the hardest to reach. Every single child is in school, with all the empowerment and protection against abuse that this implies.

Every child is immunized against the main killer diseases, benefiting from the new vaccines currently considered too expensive to be offered to all. No infant loses his life for want of a few simple, inexpensive doses of oral rehydration salts. No child is locked away from the world in a workshop, laboring in conditions approaching slavery.

The benefits of such a world accrue not only to the children but to the whole of humanity. Premature death or debilitating diseases become altogether less of a drag upon the momentum of development. The despair of extreme poverty and the disruption and destruction wreaked by conflict are markedly reduced. Economies benefit as workforces become healthier and more skilled, more adaptable to the challenges of technology and modernity.

Democratic systems become more vibrant and sustained as more literate, informed voters demand to have an active voice in the decision-making processes in their countries and keep corruption and authoritarianism in check. Above all, the energy and creativity of children and young people can be channeled into their own development and into their full, active participation in society instead of dissipated in a desperate struggle to survive.

* * *

THIS would indeed be a world fit for children. It may seem impossibly far away, but it is as simple as this: We must do everything in our power to keep our commitments to children. These commitments are clear and unambiguous. What is required now is the understanding that a commitment is a pledge with both moral and practical obligations. In a moral sense, a commitment signifies a relationship of duty. In practical terms, a commitment binds those making it to a course of action. This was implicitly recognized at the Millennium Summit in 2000, which translated fine words and noble aspirations into time-bound development objectives in the Millennium Declaration—against which the world's leaders undertook to be measured and held accountable.

Politics has been described as the art of the possible. The wonder of the Millennium agenda is that politicians and international organizations have embraced the pledge to make it possible—by 2015—for every child in the world to complete primary schooling, to cut child mortality rates by two-thirds and maternal mortality rates by three quarters, and to not only halt, but send into retreat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases. In a world with a global economy worth US$60 trillion and rising, all these goals and the other aims of the Millennium agenda are eminently attainable. As humanity continues to push through the frontiers of knowledge, and science advances further every day—from mapping the human genome to comprehending the origins of the universe—could it really be impossible during the next 10 years to banish child hunger or to keep children from dying of something as easily preventable as diarrhea?

* * *

IT is a bitter irony that the children most at risk of being bypassed by the global march against poverty and disease, illiteracy and exploitation are those whose rights are most abused and undervalued. It is time to reach out to them—not just to those already living on the margins but also to future generations. We must be their partners—not only seeking to include and protect them but also to empower them—with the knowledge that realizing the Declaration's vision of a world of peace, equity, tolerance, security, freedom, respect for the environment and shared responsibility depends on ensuring that no child is excluded or invisible.

Teacher's tricks

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHENEVER I'M INVITED TO GIVE YET ANOTHER talk to teachers on "How to make history interesting," I begin by telling the audience that the premise for the lecture is wrong because history is interesting. There is nothing wrong with the message, it is the medium that is the problem. Storytelling is essential to any history lesson. An engaging teacher who imparts not only the lesson but his own interest and enthusiasm makes a great difference.

History is a subject that encourages critical thinking. You cannot get that from "objective" tests that encourage rote memory of data like dates, names and places. Of course, these tests, whether in the form of identification, multiple choice, true or false, or fill-in-the-blanks, are easier to check than essay questions that ask why. Sometimes even I fall into the trap, so I try and make things more lively by arranging fill-in-the-blank questions into a crossword puzzle.

There are other ways to push the parameters or knowledge and understanding further. My all-time favorite question is: Did Rizal dream in color? What does this say of him as a person and as a hero? Another question would be: Bonifacio is said to have read "Lives of the Presidents of the United States." Did he read the book in English? What do you think he thought of it? What do you think his view would be on Charter change? Finding a link between the present and past is always useful.

I shouldn't bore readers with my teacher's bag of tricks, but I think any teacher, whether he or she is teaching history, calculus or calisthenics, must build self-confidence based on mastery of their subject in order to challenge the students to go beyond their textbooks. Using given data, students must be encouraged to come up with their own interpretation, their version of a familiar story. You cannot imagine how interesting it is to get students to dissect and retell the story of the Gomburza execution or the Battle of Mactan or even People Power 1986 in their own words and from their point of view. Often the stories tell more about the students and their world rather than the past. It is in processing the exercise that history gains resonance and becomes current and relevant.

Miguel Lopez de Legaspi sent a narrative report to Phillip II in 1569 and described what he saw in the Philippines. The text may be over four centuries old, yet some parts of it sound so familiar:

"This archipelago is composed of many islands. Some of them are large, and most of them thickly populated especially on the sea coast and all along the rivers... The inhabitants of these islands are not subjected to any law, king or lord. Although there are large islands in some regions, the people do not act in concert or obey any ruling body; but each man does whatever he pleases, and takes care only of himself and his slaves. He who owns most slaves, and the strongest, can obtain anything he pleases... No person favors another, unless it is for his own interest; on the other hand, if a man during some time of need shelters a relative or a brother in his house, supports him, and provides him with food for a few days, he will consider that relative as his slave from that time on, and make him serve him. They recognize neither lord nor rule; and even their slaves are not under great subjection to their masters and lords, serving them only under certain conditions, and when and how they please..."

Often I am asked for a historical answer to present-day problems or situations and all I provide are old documents to suggest that history does not repeat itself, we simply haven't changed much in the past 1,000 years. Both Magellan and Legaspi saw that there was an abundance of gold in the Philippines, they could not understand why we did not exploit the supply and only got what was needed. This they misunderstood as laziness or sloth, when it was probably what kept people sane: they were able to distinguish between their needs and their wants. Most of us do not know that the Philippines used to be a major source of gold. The better question to ask would be: Where is all that gold and how come it has not affected our economy for the better?

Legaspi writing in 1569 shook his head and wrote:

"More or less gold is found in all these islands ... however, [the natives] do not work the mines steadily, but only when forced by necessity; for because of their sloth and the little work done by the slaves, they do not even try to become wealthy, nor do they care to accumulate riches. When a chief possesses one or two pairs of earrings of very fine gold, two bracelets, and a chain, he will not trouble himself to look for any more gold. Any native who possesses a basketful of rice will not seek for more, or do any further work, until it is finished. Thus, their idleness surpasses their covetousness..."

Legaspi noted the same about pearls which were not valued as much by the natives as the covetous colonizers. Perhaps this fueled the image of a pre-Spanish paradise where everything was provided for.

Legaspi suggested that Spaniards work the gold mines steadily for much profit. Maybe they should have done so and left the people alone, but then the natives were made to work and so, as Rizal lamented, the Philippines became *nuestro perdido Eden*—our lost Eden. And that's another story.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Omens

THE OTHER DAY, I GOT AMBUSHED BY GMA-7 FOR AN interview about Quiapo's Black Nazarene rituals. The final question I got concerned a report about a cross breaking during the rituals. Was that, my interviewer asked, an omen of worse times ahead?

TV interviewers for newscasts want quick sound bites, and I mean quick (not more than 15 seconds), so I babbled something about our destinies being in our own hands, rather than in omens.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Now let me use this Friday the 13th column to tell you what I wanted to say.

We search for omens when we're about to start doing something that's risky or dangerous, mindful of possible misfortune or disaster. The Spaniards noted the many omens that our ancestors had: the cry of certain birds, even butterflies of a certain color fluttering by.

This obsession with ominous omens should not be surprising. In times past, even a short trip, say for a hunting expedition, was fraught with risks: accidents, natural disasters, animal and human predators. Even today, in the 21st century, we Filipinos still bid each other goodbye with the advice, "*Ingat ka* (Be careful)."

Omens are attempts to predict the unpredictable. Of course, one could bring in fortune-tellers but then you have to pay them and, let's face it, fortune-tellers can themselves become too predictable. I was rather amused listening to a TV show around New Year's when several fortune-tellers went on air and, to prove their mettle, gave their bold predictions for studio staff. One after the other, the staff were told either that they, or their spouses, would get to go abroad this year. Impressive. But then for Filipinos, working overseas has become as certain as the sun rising and setting.

Seers and scientists

Fortune-telling and omen-reading are really just a matter of observing what's going on around you. I think the ancient seers were the precursors of modern scientists. Over the centuries, thinking women and men realized that one could indeed predict the future through a reading of signs, but not in a supernatural way.

I'm going to give an example here with the case of two pythons caught in Metro Manila over the last month. The first one found its way into a police station and the media had a great time ridiculing our cowering crime-busters as they sought out ways to deal with the python.

Then just last week, a python slithered down Quezon Boulevard, near the Roxas District. This one had class: it tried to seek refuge under some van, rather than a dingy police station.

If I remember right, in both cases it took brave Juan de la Cruzes—not the police, not bomb-squad experts—to rescue the pythons and contact animal welfare authorities.

It's not natural for pythons to be strolling down Quezon Boulevard, so were the pythons omens of rougher times ahead?

Natural, unnatural

Yes, from our human perspective, it's not natural for pythons to be in cities. But if pythons could think and speak, they'd probably tell us they see us two-footed, noisy, smelly creatures as omens, too. After all, we've taken over the natural habitats of thousands of species of plants and animals, driving them to extinction or, in the case of pythons, to life-threatening situations. Newspapers report that the Quezon Boulevard python's belly was soft, practically empty. That was one hungry python, so hungry it came out into the streets in search of food.

Don't worry, pythons look more ominous than they really are. They're carnivorous, but they feed mainly on small mammals like rats. It did occur to me that we could send them to Malacañang or to Congress, but they'd probably prefer to starve than feed on that kind of vermin.

Eagles and more

Talking about Malacañang, I am reminded of another "omen" two or three years ago. Remember that scraggly eagle that landed in the Palace grounds? I thought of the eagle again recently, a miserable malnourished bird ready to keel over as it perched on its tree in Malacañang, as I read the recent Social Weather Stations survey showing some 2.8 million Filipino families having gone hungry, with nothing to eat, at least once in the past three months. I don't know if it was a monkey-eating eagle, and if that preference extended to politicians.

Soothsayers and seers see things others don't. Let's see if you have the makings of one. Tell me what animal you imagine as I describe another omen. For the next few weeks, the Katipunan-C5 flyover will be closed at night for repairs. The flyover has become too dangerous for heavy vehicular traffic, following a recent fire under one of its segments. The fire, which started in one of 300 shanties that had sprouted beneath the flyover, was so intense that it weakened the bridge.

The imagery of flames shooting up from the shanties, engulfing the flyover, is apocalyptic and thought-provoking. How did 300 shanties grow beneath the flyover? How many people lived there, a few thousand?

Now, what did you see as I described the fire? In my mind's eye, I saw flames mercilessly lashing out at the concrete and metal belly of a whale. Extending that metaphor, the sprawling metropolis that is Metro Manila is like one huge whale that has beached itself, intent on destroying itself, and all life in it. We are all Jonases.

Yes, omens are real, but the seers in us should attempt a more rational, even if still imaginative, interpretation of these signs. In our fixation about reading the future, we forget omens "work" by alerting us to what's going on in the present, so we can better prepare for the future.

The pythons that end up on busy thoroughfares, eagles in Malacañang, the birds and trees that are disappearing in UP's campus—nature in distress—are not just signs, but results of what we do, of our unrelenting population expansion, and our suicidal avarice.

Squatter colonies, beneath flyovers, beside railway tracks, are extraordinary omens, too, and when they burn down, the smoldering debris becomes an omen of a failing society that looks at the poor mainly as cheap labor, without providing the most basic of social services such as housing.

Strange, too, this fixation with the broken cross. We forget the two deaths and the dozens injured from a stampede. All that is one omen, not of worse times ahead but of the worst already with us, the Nazarene rituals becoming one desperate frenzy for the teeming masses. If there's anything symbolic in it all, we might want to see in the stampeding crowds and the embattled cross, the broken lives that come from the broken promises peddled by our religious and political leaders.

* * *

Announcement: Drum away those omens with the Yamato drummers of Japan, whose philosophy is that the drumbeat, like our heartbeat, is the pulse of life. They've dazzled more than a million people through 900 performances in dozens of countries. Catch them tonight at 7 p.m. at the Amphitheater of the Marikina Riverbanks Center and tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. in Ayala Center, Cebu. Free admission, courtesy of the Japan Foundation.

No-el debate unmasks elitist politics

THE OBJECTIONS TO THE CONSULtative Commission's recommendation to scrap the 2007 elections bear marks of elitism. When the law postponing the barangay elections was under deliberation in Congress, no howl of protest from any sector was heard.

Obviously, the elite politicians and bourgeois sectoral leaders do not care about barangay polls. The elective positions in the barangay governments are too demeaning and insignificant for them. It's highly unthinkable for them or for their relatives to run, anyway, in barangay elections, the electoral activity of the unshod.

These opposers say that by postponing the 2007 elections, the people will be deprived of their right to choose their officials. How about the barangay elections? By canceling the barangay polls, did we not also deprive the people of their right to elect their barangay leaders? If there is an election which the people in the grass roots, especially in rural areas, are avidly interested in, it is the barangay elections.

The barangay officials are regarded as neighborhood leaders. It is to the house of the barangay captain which a villager runs in an emergency, any time of the day—or night. When there are marital quarrels or unpaid loans, the barangay captains serve as guidance counselors or credit guarantors.

Thus, the rural people, who constitute the majority of the national population, are deeply interested in who their barangay officials are. Not so much though with the municipal, city or provincial officials who are too far from them. These high officials cannot quickly answer their needs.

It's gravely doubtful whether those opposing the ConCom proposal on the 2007 polls, really care for the people.

—RAMON A.G. BUNGABONG,
vice mayor, Buenavista,
Agusan del Norte

Life after art

I'VE BEEN RE-READing Jonathan Swift's 1726 classic satire "Gulliver's Travels," and I came upon a passage which bears distinct parallels to the bastardization of our politics, public morals, values and such, especially when seen in the light of the attempts at change made by "grandfathers" like Ninoy Aquino, etc.

It reads: "Neither could I be wholly unmoved after comparing the living with the dead, when I considered how all these pure native virtues were prostituted for a piece of money by their grandchildren, who in selling their votes and managing at elections, have acquired every vice and corruption that can possibly be learned at court." Life imitates art, believe it.

—CLIFF MICHELENA,
c/o Nodesca
Solis Subdivision,
Koronadal,
South Cotabato

Developing sub-plots

Inq7 readers remain focused on the question of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's political present and future as it impacts on the country, commenting on emerging sub-plots that thicken a main plot.

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

HERE WE GO AGAIN. IN HIS BEST *MOROmoro* yet, Tabaco (former President Fidel V. Ramos) is trying his best to help deflect the attacks of the opposition against his puppet President. What's happening is that Tabaco is taking away the initiatives of the opposition to get GMA out of office. His meeting with (Senate President Franklin) Drilon and (former Sen. Vicente Sotto calling for GMA to cut short her incumbency is (designed) to protect his puppet President from the big issues of the day. He has launched a psywar, and the media are taking it hook, line and sinker!

The poor opposition is at a loss about what to say—whining instead of getting back to the issues that matter most: getting rid of dishonest government officials (Garcillano, GMA et al.) ASAP and doing something to stimulate the economy to help the poor earn an honest, decent living.**—Roj Clemente, M8Consult@aol.com**

* * *

I can't help but point out my observations on six apparently unrelated events and their possible nexus to the political will the current administration has been exhibiting:

1. Determined implementation of the new EVAT law despite all the brickbats thrown its way and the four-month delay caused by the Supreme Court TRO instigated by the opposition.
2. Led by Dr. Jose Abueva, the submission on time of the Consultative Commission's findings and recommendations.
3. Tita Cory's call for GMA's resignation five months ago and the Cojuangcos' loss of Hacienda Luisita.
4. The critical, biased coverage by ABS-CBN of political events from July 8 to the present, the government's demand to collect P42 billion of Meralco's debt to Napocor and its virtual takeover of Maynilad Water from the Lopezes.
5. Amando Doronila's failure to secure the Commission on Appointments' approval of his appointment as ambassador and his recent reversal of his past defense of the Arroyo administration.
6. The opposition's past demand to have Garcillano arrested to make him talk about the tapes so that people will know the truth, versus its present stand telling people not to believe him.

Despite the odds, I believe GMA will survive the crisis beyond 2010, notwithstanding continued opposition efforts to divert the nation's attention from the real and more important issue facing us: economic survival and recovery.**—Victor N. Arches II, Addition Hills, San Juan, MM**

* * *

The economy is getting better. The peso is doing very well against the dollar. Gloria is doing what she can to improve the plight of poor Filipinos. Put a new group of politicians there, particularly those who don't know what to do, and what will happen to us? This time it's not a question of who we like to govern, but if he/she knows how. What guarantee do we have that those seeking to overthrow President Arroyo will not do what she is doing? *Walang* guarantee—*lahat 'yan mga interes muna nila bago tayo.* Look back at our history, *meron bang nabago? WALA!*—**Noel Salangsang, noelgsal@sbcglobal.net**

* * *

I think it's time for the country to go ahead and unite again. President Arroyo may have made a mistake, but it was not a mistake that merits her impeachment. Who doesn't blunder? I believe she should continue until her term is up. She's done a good job and is an asset to the Philippines.

After all, our country has been through a lot of crises but overcame them because of the tenacity, flexibility, goodness of the heart, and love of the Filipino people.**—Lotie B. Fields, Lotiebfields@aol.com**

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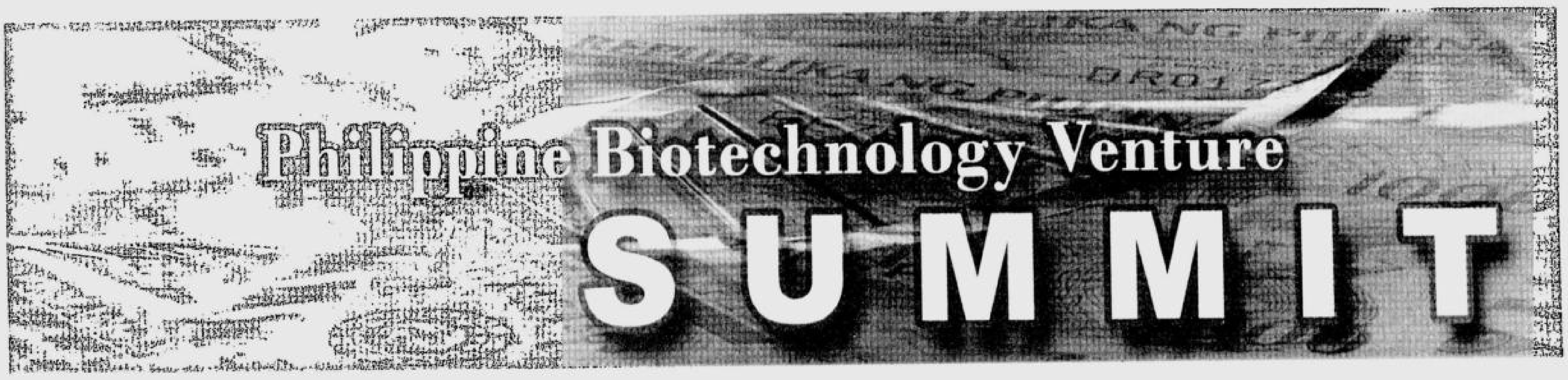

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Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

GIs in Cotabato war games told: Behave

KIDAPAWAN CITY—AMERICAN SOLDIERS WHO WILL be training their Filipino counterparts in a month-long exercise in Carmen town have been advised to behave following the controversy over the rape case filed by a Filipina against US Marines in Subic.

North Cotabato Board member Jun Garcesa said the military has assured them that US soldiers will not commit any abuse while they are in the province.

The Philippines-US military exercises will push through on Jan. 17 at the camp of the 602nd Infantry Brigade in Poblacion Carmen.

The month-long Balance Piston 06-02 training exercise will be on Small Unit Tactics, Basic Rifle Marksmanship, Advanced Rifle Marksmanship, Combat Lifesaver Training, and Field Training Exercise.

The American soldiers will also enter Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) identified areas. But Capt. Lito Demabildo, 602nd Infantry Brigade spokesperson, said the US soldiers would enter MILF areas not on a hostile mission but to give medical assistance to residents.

Demabildo said included in the exercises are humanitarian missions in three villages of Carmen. These are the villages of Tibuluan, Kibines and Malmar, known to be "MILF areas."

Eid Kabalu, speaking for the MILF, said the outreach program for residents of the three adjoining barangays is a welcome move for the rebel movement.

He, however, reminded training organizers that they should coordinate with the government and MILF ceasefire panel to "avoid mis-encounters and untoward incidents."

He admitted that residents of the area are relatives and sympathizers of the MILF.

The training, a continuation of the July 2005 exercises, will commence on Jan. 17.

Demabildo said the Army expects no hitches in this training since the one held last year was a success.

Told of the planned protests by militant groups in North Cotabato, Maj. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, 6th Infantry Division commander, said as long as the protest action is peaceful and orderly, the protesters would be allowed to air their grievances.

Dema-ala said the training will be confined to the camp and would not in anyway endanger the lives and pieces of property owned by civilians in Carmen.

Col. Ruperto Pabustan, 602nd brigade chief, said they have decided to confine the training to the camp to avoid conflict with the MILF.

During last year's training, a Filipino soldier was killed when the rifle of his colleague fell and went off as they prepared to sleep.

Pabustan assured that the same will not happen again.

Gov. Manny Piñol also assured the people of North Cotabato that what happened in Subic will never happen in Carmen. Piñol said most of the US servicemen participating in this training are aware of the rights of Filipinos, especially women. *Jeoffrey Maitem, Edwin O. Fernandez, Charlie C. Señase and Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

A MAN unloads bags of eggplants from a tricycle in Poblacion, Villasis, Pangasinan, in preparation for the holding of the first Talong Festival. RAY ZAMBRANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Town grills 20,000 eggplants for feast

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VILLASIS, PANGASINAN—IT IS this agricultural town's turn to catch the world's attention to its major produce—eggplant—when local officials and residents staged the first Talong Festival on Wednesday.

A 500-meter long grill was laid along the highway traversing this eastern Pangasinan town and 3,000 kilograms or more than 20,000 pieces of eggplants were simultaneously cooked.

It was followed by a street party during which the residents and their visitors partook of the cooked vegetables or gave them away to friends.

Before the long grill was held, a cookfest was conducted and the town's 21 villages tried to outdo one another in coming up with different recipes with eggplant as the main ingredient.

The winners were the eggplant garlic teriyaki, classical stuffed *talong* and *talong* steak.

High school students from the town, garbed in colorful costumes but with the colors of eggplant dominating the scene, danced down the town's highway during a street dancing competition.

Mayor Nonato Abrenica said this year's festival was a "dry run" for a bigger activity being planned next year.

Villasis (pop: 55,000) is an agricultural town known as the vegetable bowl of Pangasinan. It produces ingredients for the vegetable dish "pinakbet"—tomatoes, eggplant and *ampalaya*.

"But our biggest harvest is eggplant," Abrenica said.

Some 270 hectares of farm land are planted to eggplant every after rice harvest and each hectare averages a yield of 40 tons of eggplant. This translates to 10,000 tons of eggplant produced by the town every year.

"We are planning to devote some areas to eggplant production, especially those in the hilly areas," Abrenica said, adding that the town experienced a bumper harvest this year.

The town plants mostly the so-called "east-west" variety of eggplant which is long and purple.

With the Talong Festival, the town hopes to create awareness about the abundance of eggplant produced in the town, and to attract investors to the place, Abrenica said.

To support the agricultural sector, the municipal government put up a trading post where farmers bring their produce to sell to traders.

ROUNDUP

Reb land mine found

DAVAO CITY—The military on Thursday reported it has recovered a land mine planted by New People's Army rebels along a road in Barangay Bacungan in Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. Maj. Jose Cuerpo, chief of the military's 5th Civil Relations Group based in Camp Panacan, said soldiers in the area were alerted on Monday by residents about the NPA land mine. Cuerpo said the land mine had a wire attached to it and was buried some two feet below the surface. Cuerpo said it was fortunate that the land mine did not explode at a time Bacungan was busy celebrating its fiesta.
Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

New Mindanao exec

KORONADAL CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Deputy Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Virgillio Leyretana as the new chief of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco). Leyretana, also concurrent head of the Mindanao Peace and Development Fund and former mayor of Cotabato City, replaced Jesus Dureza, who was recently appointed by the President as presidential adviser on the peace process. Ms Arroyo made the announcement as she addressed the city's 66th founding anniversary celebration on Jan. 10.
Jeoffrey Maitem and Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Bible convention

SINILOAN, Laguna—A Filipino theologian, professor, lecturer and head of the ministry that takes care of retired priests throughout the country will be the guest speaker at the Third Diocesan Bible Convention to be held on Jan. 21, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Saints Peter and Paul Parish here. Rev. Msgr. Sabino A. Vengco Jr. will talk on the theme: "Pananatili kay Jesus, Salita ng Diyos." The Bible convention is being organized by the Diocesan Biblical Apostolate of San Pablo. Convention organizers, headed by DBA director Msgr. Alex Amante, invited everyone in Laguna to attend the convention which is for free.
Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Sea turtle rescued

ILLUSTRATION STEPH BRAVO

CEBU CITY—A sea turtle weighing about 200 kilograms was rescued Jan. 3 by two fishermen at a seaweeds farm in Barangay Abugon, Sibonga, around 50.7 km south of here. Lourdes Pagar, Sibonga's municipal agricultural technician, said the sea turtle weighed 180 kilograms to 200 kilograms, was five feet in length and 2.5 feet in width. Pagar said the sea turtle was female and she decided to call her "Mama Pawik," short for *pawikan*, the Cebuano term for sea turtle. Mama Pawik was released at the Sibonga wharf at about 11:30 a.m. Jan. 5, which was witnessed by about a hundred of people. Pagar said the sea turtle paused for a moment and turned its head toward her onlookers before it headed out to sea, she said.
Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Elevator pins man to death

BAGUIO CITY—A maintenance supervisor of a shopping mall here was killed on Tuesday when the elevator he was fixing broke down and pinned him. Jose Edwin Singalaoan, 46, maintenance chief of the Baguio Center Mall, was repairing the elevator unit when its mechanism failed and the unit suddenly dropped, according to SPO1 Mario Sabas. Mall employees heard Singalaoan scream but he was already dead when they found him.
Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Cordillera cop chief confirms 'jueteng'

BAGUIO CITY—THE POLICE chief of Cordillera has confirmed that "jueteng" operations exist in Kalinga but has discounted reports that the game has resurfaced in Baguio and Benguet.

Chief Supt. Leonardo Dionisio said he based his statement on feedback from nongovernment sources, instead of information relayed through the police or local governments.

He said a nongovernment channel should provide unbiased data about illegal gambling, now that Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, issued a zero-tolerance policy against police units that are unable to stop illegal gambling in their areas.

Text hotline

Dionisio said he was installing a text hotline exclusively for the Cordillera NGOs and the public to help him pin down erring police officers involved in jueteng.

"*Ang problema lang dun baka maubos ang kapulisan natin* (The only problem is we may end up removing the whole police force)," he said.

He said he would turn over the jueteng report in Kalinga to the Catholic diocese there to help "galvanize relationships" between the police and the residents.

He ordered Senior Supt. James Dogao, Kalinga police chief, to coordinate an anti-jueteng campaign.

Gambling will continue to mushroom, he said, but a community-initiated anti-gambling program is the ticket to reducing illegal gambling operations in the provinces. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

SAD HOMECOMING IN BOHOL

Fil-Am soldier receives hero's welcome

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

AN AMERICAN flag is draped over the casket carrying the remains of US Sgt. Myra Maravillosa, who was killed on duty in Iraq, as she arrives at the Tagbilaran airport.

NILO P. SAPONG/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

INABANGA, BOHOL—LITTLE known Barangay U-og gave Sgt. Myla Maravillosa a welcome fit for a heroine.

A giant streamer welcoming Myla hang across the national highway in front of the U-og-Ubujan Elementary School which was about a kilometer away from the house where she grew up.

From the corner where the barangay road leads to U-og and the national highway, some 66 kilometers north of Tagbilaran, lined schoolchildren waving hand-made paper flags of both the Philippines and the United States.

Curious residents trekked the occasionally muddy barangay road as they followed the white hearse that carried Myla's remains from Tagbilaran City and a procession of at least seven vehicles as they turned toward Sitio Banilad, located more than a kilometer from the national highway.

Home now

"You are home now… you will never be forgotten," aptly declared a streamer on the Lumayag house where Myla's remains would lie for the next nine days.

The house in Sitio Banilad, Barangay U-og was obviously prepared for the high-profile wake.

Four square white canopies were assembled in the empty spaces inside the fence of the approximately 800-square meter Lumayag property.

On Wednesday afternoon, uniformed waiters of a Tagbilaran-based caterer augmented the food prepared by the family for the long lines of people who crammed the yard while waiting for their turn to enter the house and view Myla's remains.

Lights

Estelita, Myla's mother, along with a nun-cousin, entertained Gov. Erico Aumentado and Inabanga Mayor Josephine Socorro Jumamoy who were among those who waited outside the house while a team that included a Caucasian prepared the coffin for public viewing.

Workers hurriedly fitted extension wires to electric lamps to light up the compound during the wake.

"We had already started preparing for Myla's arrival as soon as we learned that she was coming," said Gaudioso, 70, her eldest uncle who lives alone in the house.

It was Gaudioso and his younger sister, Felisa, who took care of Myla when Estelita joined her two other sisters in Hawaii in the early 1990s. Myla joined her mother in Hawaii in 1997, after she graduated from high school in Inabanga. She later joined the US military.

Village Chair Cecilio Villamayor, 62, admitted this has been the biggest event in U-og for as long as he can remember.

"It is sad because we have lost a daughter, but it is an honor that we share with the country, the province and the town," he replied in Cebuano when asked to comment on the return of the Fil-Am soldier who was killed in Iraq on Christmas Eve.

There were only a few muffled sobs when the line, which included children who never had a glimpse of Myla in her lifetime, leading to Myla's coffin was finally called.

To the residents of U-og however, there is no doubt that Myla is greater in death than she was in life.

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Card fraud gangs go int'l

By Margaux C. Ortiz

CARD FRAUD SYNDICATES ARE now tapping a lucrative international market.

Instead of local card holders, members of the syndicate now target overseas card owners, according to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

NBI National Capital Region (NCR) chief Ruel Lasala said they uncovered the new scheme after arresting a suspected member of the syndicate last month. "A bigger amount of money is at stake with this kind of modus operandi," Lasala told reporters in an interview yesterday.

Suspect Romeo Jalimao Jr., 33, of 3424 Bataan St., Bacood, Sta. Mesa, Manila, was apprehended after withdrawing P200,000 in cash at a Citibank branch in Binondo, using another person's debit card.

$4,000 daily credit limit

NBI NCR executive officer Ferdinand Lavin explained that Jalimao, using a Citibank Mastercard owned by Ramon Chuaying, was allowed to withdraw $4,000 per day compared to local Automated Teller Machine (ATM) cardholders who have lower credit limits.

Lavin said they began monitoring Jalimao's movements when they received a tip about the syndicate's illegal activities last Dec. 21.

Jalimao confessed that the group had been able to withdraw a total of P3 million from Chuaying's account in four separate transactions.

The suspect also told investigators that the syndicate paid him P10,000 for every withdrawal he made.

"When we invited Chuaying to the NBI, he was surprised because the last time he made a transaction using the card was in California last June," Lavin said.

Jalimao told NBI agents that members of the group would call up banks based in the United States and introduce themselves as a card owner. They would ask for a new card after claiming to have lost their old one.

"The syndicate member may have applied for a new card and fabricated documents to claim the package from the courier company," Lavin said.

Lavin added that the suspects may have gotten the necessary information used in obtaining a new card from the billing statements of their victims. "Billing statements contain all the customer's details except for the personal identification number or PIN," Lavin said.

The NBI charged Jalimao with estafa and violation of Republic Act 8484 or the Access Device Act in the Manila Prosecutor's Office.

Don't be a victim!

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INvestigation (NBI) has issued the following tips on how to avoid being victimized by credit card syndicates:

- Do not use your birthday as a personal identification number (PIN) for your card. Syndicate members can easily decode your PIN by using data in your other documents.
- Keep your billing statements in a safe place. Do not leave them lying around or don't dispose of them carelessly because syndicate members could use the information in these documents.
- Do not give out your account number or other personal information like your birth date to other people.
- List down your credit card numbers so that you will still have something to refer to in case you lose it.

Margaux C. Ortiz

2 die in Pasig, Mandaluyong road accidents

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TWO MEN WERE KILLED AND ONE was injured in road accidents that happened in Pasig and Mandaluyong cities.

On Wednesday night, driver Reynaldo Castillo, 50, died while Brando Dizon, 32, was injured when their truck fell off a bridge and onto a dike before sliding into the Pasig River.

Pasig City traffic head Chief Insp. Fernando Lumbania told the INQUIRER that the victims, on board a white Mitsubishi L-200, were passing through the Floodway Bridge in Barangay Manggahan, when the truck swerved to the left, hitting the railings. It then fell off the bridge and smashed onto the river dike below, before sliding into the murky river, Lumbania said.

Castillo died on the way to the hospital while Dizon was brought to the Ospital ng Makati for treatment.

In the second incident, messenger Ricky Parman, 30, was hit by a passing tractor head while he was crossing Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong City early yesterday morning.

He was already dead when his friends brought him to the hospital.

METROBRIEFS

No more games

SINASAYANG N'YO ANG BINABAYARAN NAMING TAXES ! MAG TRABAHO NGA KAYO
ILLUSTRATION STEPH BRAVO

QUIT playing games and get back to work. Makati's Department of Environmental Services (DES) issued this warning last week to its employees after some of them were caught playing computer games during office hours. "It has been observed that some of the office staff and district staff have been playing computer games during working hours, a violation of the Code of Ethics for civil servants," said the memo, signed by Support Services Division head Mildred Castillo. Violators may be suspended from five to 15 days, depending on the gravity of their offense, said the memo. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Barretto a no-show

ACTRESS Claudine Barretto was a no-show in yesterday's mediation hearing with Yes! Magazine editor Jo-Ann Maglipon, putting in doubt the prospects of an amicable settlement between the two. The actress' lawyer Ellen Veza told mediation officer Lourdes Lim that Barretto would rather let the courts resolve her standoff with Maglipon over privacy and press freedom issues. Maglipon, meanwhile, said she would not return to the mediation table since the actress did not seem willing to settle the matter at all. Barretto had demanded that Maglipon seek her permission before writing about her. The editor, however, said this would be an infringement on press freedom.

DJ Yap

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QC's 'killer road' to undergo facelift

WRONG TURN
Rescue teams search for two men on board a truck that fell off the Floodway Bridge in Barangay Manggahan, Pasig City, Wednesday. (*Story on page A15*) JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A TWO-KILOMETER PORTION OF Commonwealth Avenue (also known as Don Mariano Marcos Avenue), dubbed as Quezon City's "killer highway," will soon undergo a facelift in line with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's (MMDA) program to improve major thoroughfares in the metropolis.

The section that would undergo rehabilitation is the busiest part of the avenue. It begins some 400 m before the Ever Gotesco Mall, and ends 300 m after the avenue's intersection at Batasan Road. Among the landmarks on the strip are St. Peter's Church and the Sandiganbayan building.

Commonwealth Avenue has been tagged as one of the metropolis' most perilous roads because of the number of pedestrians who had been killed while crossing it.

"We are beginning with this section because this is what our budget can afford," said Ramon Ona, chief of the Traffic Engineering Center (TEC) of the MMDA Traffic Operations Center. The national government has allotted P138 million for the rehabilitation. Ona said the rehabilitation would begin early next month and was expected to be completed by August.

"Assuming there would be no problem, we could do it in three to four months. But at times, unexpected problems like the breakdown of equipment could slow us down," said Ona.

"We will maximize the entire 95-m width of the road," he added. "We chose the section because it's the busiest, and it's the part where most vehicles pass through."

The project's components, said Ona, include the installation of safety signs and three loading and unloading bays on each side of the road, the construction of walkways and bike lanes and the establishment of redesigned U-turn slots to allow for a wider and safer turning radius.

The MMDA also plans to extend an existing footbridge straddling the avenue's width near the Batasan Road intersection. The agency ultimately aims to rehabilitate the entire 10.2-km stretch of the avenue.

Under the MMDA's P3.10-billion Seven Major Roads Program, other main arteries in the metropolis, including Edsa, the R-10 Road, C-5 Road, Quezon Avenue, Marcos Highway, and the McArthur Highway, would also be improved.

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Painters cast spell on Wizards

Rain or Shine nips league-leader Magnolia as Hapee-PCU stuns Montaña

By Jasmine W. Payo

RAIN OR SHINE BUCKED A GREAT EFFORT by Magnolia in the final quarter to escape with a 69-68 decision yesterday in the PBL Heroes Cup at the San Andres Gym.

The Elasto Painters blew an 18-point lead but held on to slap a second straight loss on the Wizards, who again failed to clinch the first outright semifinal berth.

"I'm happy with the way we performed today, except for the last five minutes," said coach Caloy Garcia after his Painters tied the Wizards for the lead at 7-3.

The Hapee-PCU Teethmasters also remained in the hunt for an automatic semifinal slot after an earlier 75-65 stunner over the seasoned Montana Jewels.

Snappy guard Jason Castro shot 22 points, including seven baskets in the final stretch to propel the Teethmasters to solo third with a 6-4 record.

Robert Sanz also picked up right where he left off by delivering 18 markers in the Teethmasters' second straight upset win.

"Credit goes to the team especially the PCU players—Jason, Robert and our team leader Gabby (Espinas)," said coach Junel Baculi, whose wards drubbed Magnolia last Saturday.

The Jewels, along with Harbour Centre and Granny Goose, dropped out of contention for the two outright semifinal slots with 5-5 records.

The Elasto Painters opened a 46-28 lead but had to survive a Magnolia rally mounted by Kim Valenzuela and Kelly Williams in the closing minutes.

Eugene Tan and Junjun Cabatu topscored for the Painters with 13 points apiece.

Williams paced Magnolia with 17 points while Valenzuela added 12, including six straight points that pushed the Wizards within a point at 69-68 with 45.4 seconds remaining.

The Wizards had a chance to pull it out but Williams missed a jumper in the dying seconds.

The Teethmasters overcame the hot shooting of Jewels veteran Alex Compton, who drilled in 12 of his 22 points from the three-point area.

The Jewels threatened at 64-62 but Castro scored five of the Teethmasters' next seven points to keep them on top at 71-65, with less than two minutes remaining.

The scores:

First Game

HAPEE-PCU 75—Castro 22, Sanz 18, Moreno 9, Espinas 6, Gonzales 6, Belga 6, Solis 4, Razon 2, Misa 2.

MONTAÑA 65—Compton 22, Juntilla 18, Bono 11, Baguion 3, Magpayo 3, Capus 3, Mercado 2, Castro 2, Vergara 1, Dela Cuesta 0, Guerrero 0.

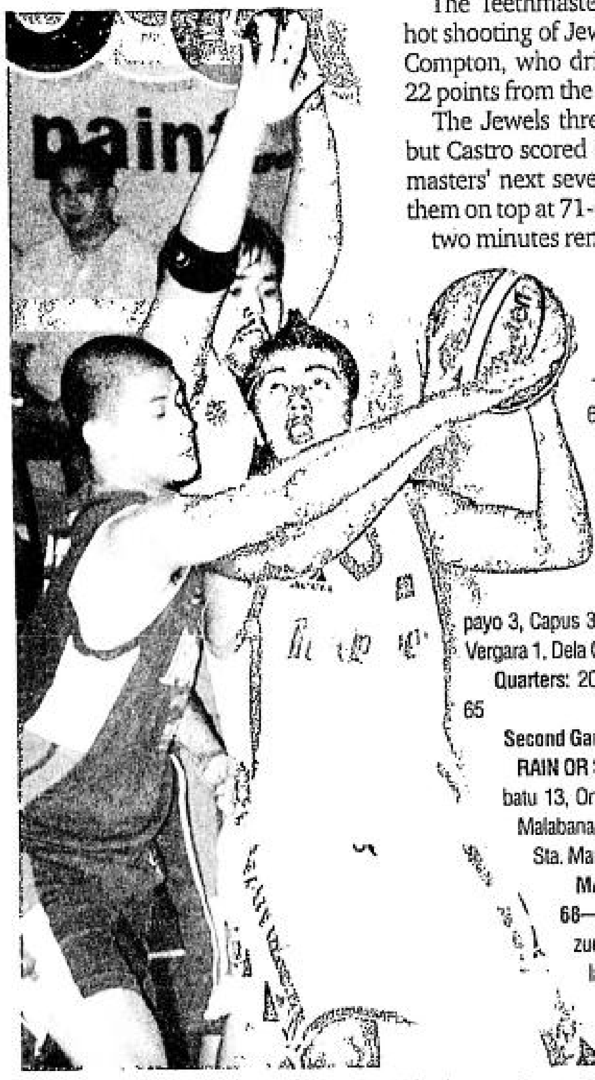
Quarters: 20-15-40-41, 60-53, 75-65

Second Game

RAIN OR SHINE 69—Tan 13, Cabatu 13, Ortiguerra 12, Tangkay 9, Malabanan 6, Aljamal 6, Enrile 4, Sta. Maria 4, Sagad 2, Reyes 0.

MAGNOLIA 68—Williams 17, Valenzuela 12, Rizada 10, Misolas 9, Santos 7, Chan 7, Isip 6, Angeles 0, Bombeo 0

Quarters: 31-18, 41-28, 59-48, 69-68



MICHAEL Beau Belga of Hapee-PCU tries to shoot off Montaña's Kent Bono (left) and Al Magpayo. RYAN LIM

NBN-4 to air PSA Awards tomorrow

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTSWRITERS Association (PSA) Annual Awards Night set tomorrow at the Manila Pavilion will be televised over NBN-4 on a slightly delayed basis.

The two-hour rites honoring the top sports achievers of 2005 is to be shown on the government television station shortly after the 9 p.m. lotto draw.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is the special guest in the annual program being held by the country's oldest media organization.

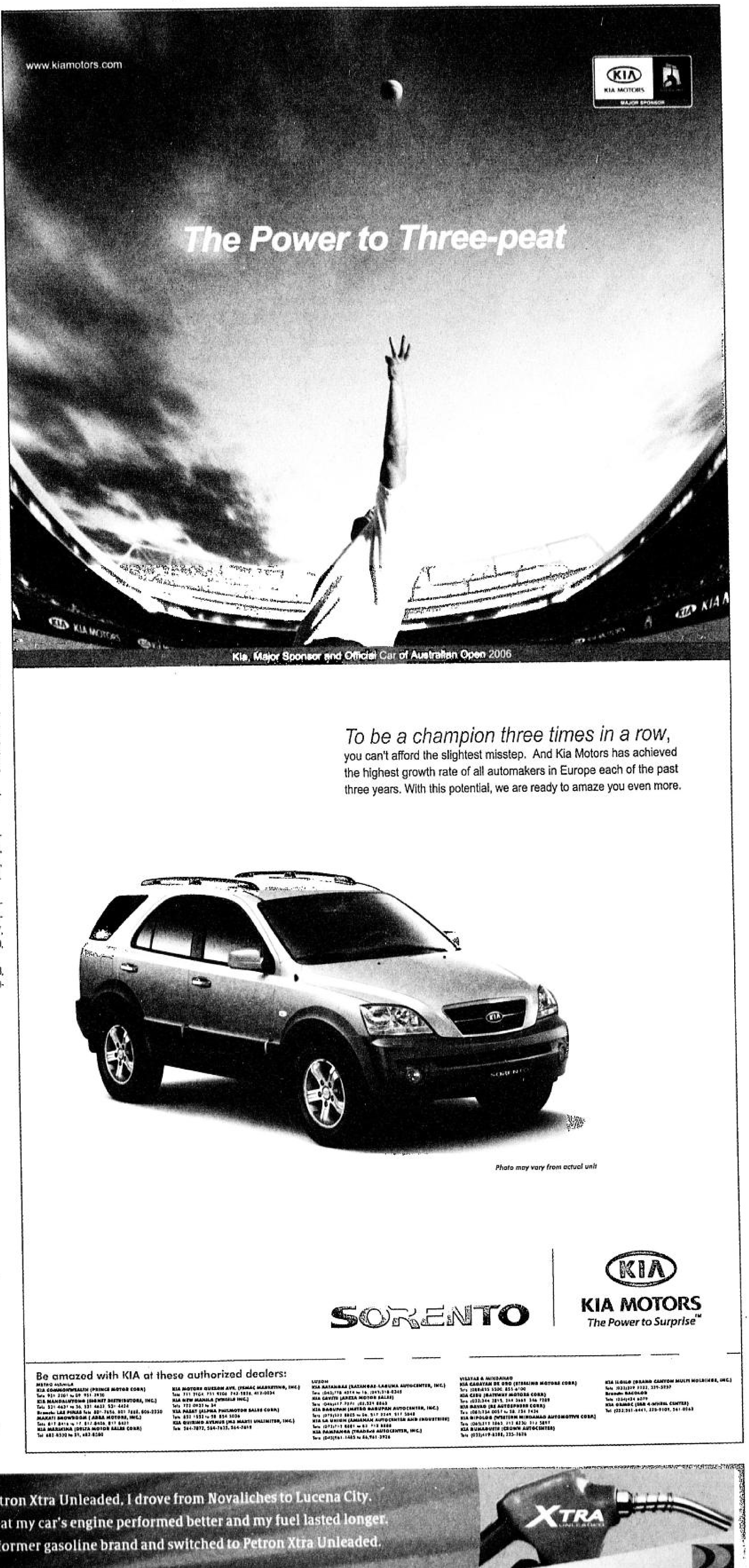
The affair starts promptly at 7 p.m.

The Chief Executive will personally award the Athlete of the Year trophy to Team Philippines for its momentous triumph in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games—the first for the country since joining the event in 1977.

Philippine Olympic Committee resident and guest of honor Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez and other top sports officials join the President in bestowing honor to the athletes and entities which made 2005 a remarkable one.

Diver Shiela Mae Perez will receive the award in behalf of the athletes who made up Team Philippines, winner of 113 gold, 84 silver and 94 bronze medals in the last SEA Games.

Hosting the affair sponsored by Red Bull and with PSC, San Miguel and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza as supporters are amateur basketball standout Alex Compton and sports broadcaster Patricia Bermudez-Hizon.



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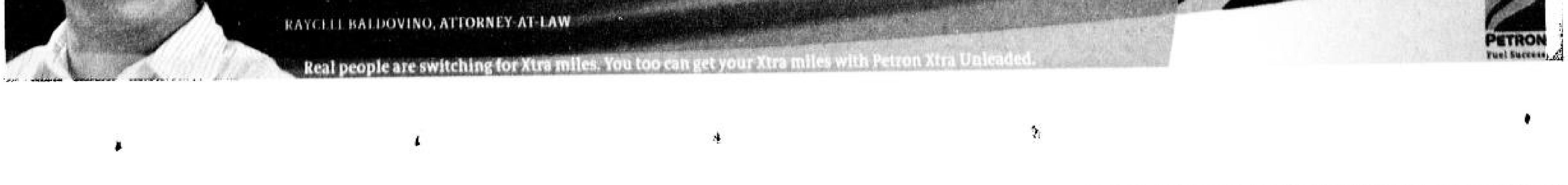

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Beermen have momentum vs Express today

PEÑA: Game 2 hero

GAME TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
7 p.m.—Air21 vs San Miguel Beer

IT SHOULD NOT HAVE COME TO THIS.

After blowing what looked like a won game Wednesday, Air21 now goes through the pressure cooker of a rubber match against San Miguel Beer today in their San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference wild card duel at the Araneta Coliseum.

And odds now favor the veteran Beermen in the 7 p.m. do-or-die clash, thanks to Dorian Peña, whose putback with 1.6 seconds left in Game 2 gave SMB a 104-103 victory that tied the series.

The Express earlier looked to have the quarterfinal slot all locked up against Red Bull Barako after razing the Beermen's 20-point lead and forging ahead, 103-102, with 30 seconds left.

But Air21 import Shawn Daniels, who had earlier missed three free throws, grievously missed four more gift shots, giving the Beermen a final chance to put the game away.

San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico expects no easy sailing, though, for his tired Beermen.

"We have to make some adjustments if we want to advance to the next round," said Uichico, whose Beermen have hardly taken a breather after surviving a pair of make-or-break games against the Coca-Cola Tigers.

"The one-day rest will not be enough, but we will certainly need it before Game 3," said Uichico.

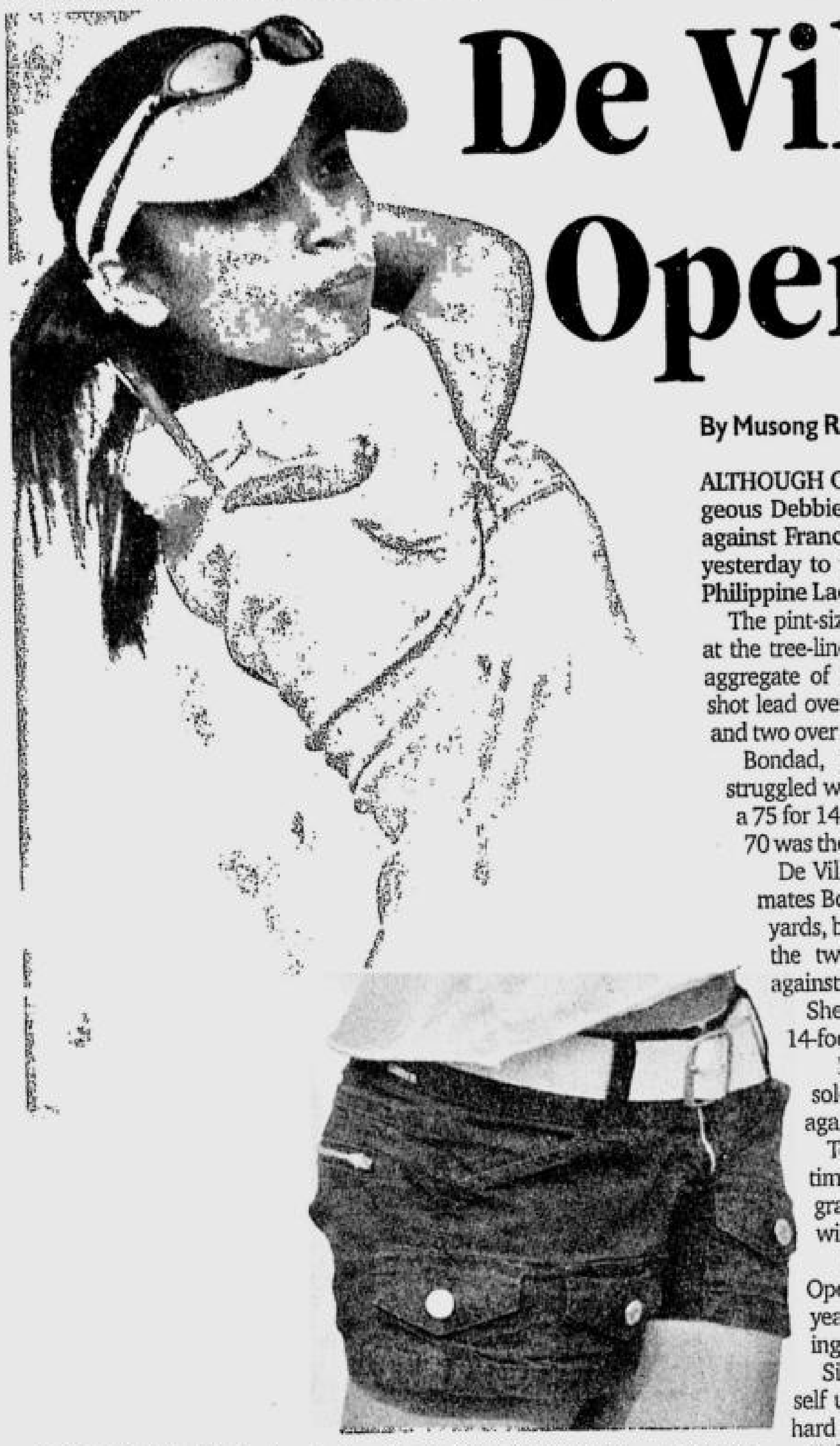
The Beermen came out flat in the series opener and easily yielded to the Express.

But they showed a lot of spunk early in Game 2, opening a 20-point lead in the third quarter before Gary David sparked a rally that put Air21 on the verge of a quarterfinal berth.

"I hope we could match [Express'] intensity and get lucky again in the end," said Peña.

The Beermen are looking to escape the ignominy of finishing near the bottom of the standings after capturing the crown here last year. They are also seeking to become the first team to defend a title since Red Bull Barako did the trick in the 2002 Commissioner's Cup. June Navarro

De Villa RP Ladies Open leader by 1



DEBBIE de Villa hits her tee shot on No. 3 of Manila Golf Club. JUN RAPANAN

By Musong R. Castillo

ALTHOUGH OUTSIZED AND OUTHIT, A COURAgeous Debbie de Villa more than held her own against Frances Bondad and the other big guns yesterday to wrest the 36-hole lead of the 44th Philippine Ladies Amateur Open championship.

The pint-sized teener assembled an even-par 71 at the tree-lined Manila Golf Club for a two-round aggregate of two-over 144 and a precarious one-shot lead over Korean Lee Seo-jae, who fired a 72, and two over Bondad and Hong Kong's Demi Mak.

Bondad, the 2004 winner and hot favorite, struggled with all sorts of problems and soared to a 75 for 146 that left her in a tie with Mak, whose 70 was the tournament's best score thus far.

De Villa was constantly outdriven by flightmates Bondad and Lora Roberto by at least 30 yards, but she more than held her own against the two veteran players with two birdies against two bogeys.

She gained the solo lead with a downhill 14-foot putt for par on the 17th.

Roberto also turned in a 75 for 147 for solo fifth while Bondad had just one birdie against five bogeys in a 36-39 round.

Today's final round will mark the second time that the 15-year-old De Villa, a ninth grader at International School-Makati, will be teeing off as the leader in an Open.

De Villa led the Indonesian Amateur Open after an opening-round 75 late last year, but she ballooned to a 90 the following day to drop out of the title chase.

Since then, Debbie has re-dedicated herself under swing guru Bong Lopez, and the hard work is starting to pay off.

"She's one of the hardest workers I know," said Lopez of the 5-foot De Villa. "You don't have to ask her to practice, because she comes to the range on time and does work on her own. Debbie is very much like Jayvie (Agojo, last year's champion) and Frances (Bondad) as far as work ethics go."

Sri Lankan Thuhashini Selvaratnam, the 2000 winner, carded 74 anew for 148 and solo sixth heading into the final 18 holes today, with Fil-American teener Cristina Corpus another shot back after a 72.

Reb Sotelo-Bareng was in solo eighth at 150 after shooting a 74, while jungolf wonder Dottie Ardina, who shot 77 on Wednesday despite battling cramps in the final six holes, was all alone in ninth place after a second round 75 for 152, eight off the lead.

Bacolod native Mia Piccio, second placer in the first Philippine Women's Match Play last September, improved slightly with a 75 and shared 10th spot with former Open winner Carmelette Villaroman (75) and Crystal Faith Superal (80) with 154s.

Korean Woo Young-kyung, the runner-up to Agojo last year, slumped to a 78 and dropped to solo 13th place at 155.

Philippine team member Anya Tanpinco skied to an 81 for 156 in a tie with Lucy Landicho and Hong Kong's Ginger Mak, who both carded 77s.

Bondad was at one-under after a birdie on the par-5 seventh hole which she reached in two.

But the 17-year-old got undone in the ninth when she found the greenside trap and dropped a shot.

Sponsors of the tournament are the First Gentleman Foundation, International Container Terminal Services Inc., Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Sports Commission, Banco de Oro Private Banking, Pacific Online, Gilberto Duavit, Golden Donuts, Philippine Daily Inquirer, TNT Express, Pagcor, Philippine Airlines, Alexis Jewelers, Electrobus Consolidated, Keystone Lamps, Crucible Gallery, All Transport Network, Bailey's and Hyatt Hotels.

Conscience

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THE OFFICE OF former senator Freddie Webb called me the other day asking for my fearless forecast on the Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales fight set for next Sunday, Jan. 22, (Manila time) in Las Vegas.

In reply, I told Dingdong Marco, executive producer of Webb's Saturday radio program over dzMM, that I might not be the right person to make an honest analysis of the fight since I had sort of walked away from the sport some years back because of what was happening to it. My decision to break my romance with pro boxing was based on moral and medical grounds, I told Marco, adding that I was simply following my conscience. I felt the boxers were being exploited and I wanted no part of it.

On moral grounds, I told Marco that I've had enough of sleazy and shrewd promoters (remember glib-tongued Murad Muhammad?), frequent mismatches, phony boxers, falsified records and rigged ratings. However, I made it very clear to him that I have no problem covering pro boxing, a thriving, popular sport, just as I have no problem with sportswriters (and boxing apologists) who cover the fights for TV and their newspapers. After all, pro boxing is legal in this country and in most parts of the world, except in Sweden and Norway which have abolished it.

On medical grounds, I have already written many times about the dangers inherent in pro boxing, citing its abuses and lack of safety measures that could leave the boxers permanently brain-damaged, disabled or dead; the growing opposition of the medical community, including renowned members of the American Medical Association and the British Medical Association; and the increasing call to ban pro boxing around the world.

In the Philippines, the medical evidence against boxing is overwhelming. Since 1979, close to 20 boxers have died while many more, including those unreported to the Games and Amusements Board, have suffered serious brain injuries.

Said brain specialists James Tyler, director general of the British Safety Council: "The brain is like a blancmange, a gelatin-like rubbery pudding. Every time a blow (to the head) is struck, the brain cracks against the inside of the hard skull, and it has the effect of numbing the brain or causing permanent brain damage."

Boxers don't have to die to underscore the violence and cruelty of the sport. One only has to look at the list of those who have been maimed for life or reduced to stuttering derelicts like the legendary heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, a victim of Parkinson's syndrome.

"I was struck that this man (Ali), who previously was known for his glibness, was almost unintelligible," once said Dr. Nelson Richards, president of the American Academy of Neurology.

* * *

BULACAN-CAVITE HACKFIGHTS. The annual "Bulacan vs Cavite Hackfights Series" marks its 14th year this Sunday at the world-class Cavite Coliseum and Derby Center in Bacoor, Cavite.

Started by lawyer Pete Principe in January 1991, this unique affair has become very popular and is considered by cockfighting aficionados as the only one of its kind in the country. Former Sen. Ramon Revilla Sr., Sen. Bong Revilla Jr. and PCSO director Strike Revilla will again host the traditional breakfast at their Bacoor residence for the more than 500 visitors from Bulacan.

Among the guests and prominent participants are Meycauayan Mayor Eddie Alarilla, Obando Mayor Zoy Santiago, Bocaue Mayor Apen dela Cruz, Paombong Mayor Donato Marcos, Vice Mayor Tito Santiago, councilors Nonoy Milan and Mel Nieto, ABC president Roning Salao, barangay captains Amboy Manlapaz and Danny Rubio, Eddie Pacheco, Boy Catindig, Mother Lily Marquez, Lauro Visconde, Remy San Luis, engineers Rey Tadeo, Fred Corpuz and Teddy de Guzman, Alex Co, Demy Reyes and Edmar Abella.

* * *

BONUS FOR A JOB WELL DONE. I congratulate the Philippine Sports Commission for approving a bonus totaling more than P1.5 million for the medal winners of the Philippine team that saw action in the recent 3rd Asean Para Games. PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez said the cash rewards to outstanding differently abled athletes are as follows: P25,000 for a gold, P15,000 for a silver and P10,000 for a bronze medal. In the 3rd Asean Para Games, the Philippines won 22 gold, 42 silver and 40 bronze medals.

UNO High five, shoots down St. Stephen

GAMES TODAY
(*UNO Gym*)
5:30 p.m.—Xavier vs. Hope Christian
7 p.m.—St. Jude vs. GCHS

UNO HIGH SCHOOL relied on the trio of Kevin Lee and twin brothers Karl Steven and Kirk Steven Ngo to bring down defending champion St. Stephen High School, 66-61, and assume the solo lead in the 30th Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball Association-Hitachi Cup basketball tournament at the UNO Gym.

Lee scattered 22 points, while Karl Steven and Kirk Steven, contributed 18 and 10, respectively, for UNO High of coach Stephen Ong and sports head Milton Yu.

The win was the second in as many matches for UNO, which bested Grace Christian High School, 71-57, in its debut last Jan. 7.

Overshadowed by UNO's second win was St. Jude Catholic School, which banked on Carl Cu's 18 points and 20 rebounds to topple Hope Christian High School, 69-49.

In the Aspirants Division, St. Stephen downed Chiang Kai Shek, 53-47, for its second straight win. Xavier defeated St. Jude, 89-52, in the other match.

Barrera wants 'Pac' rematch

FINALLY BREAKING HIS SILENCE, Mexican ring great Marco Antonio Barrera said he's ready to face Manny Pacquiao in a rematch of their 2003 battle won by the fierce Filipino hero by technical knockout in the 11th round.

But Barrera, now the world's top super featherweight, qualified that Pacquiao should first win his rematch with Erik "El Terrible" Morales on Jan. 21 in Las Vegas before a rematch can be negotiated.

Eric Gomez, the matchmaker for Barrera's promotional outfit, Golden Boy Promotions, informed the boxing website Fightnews in an interview yesterday that Barrera's March 25 showdown with Jesus Chavez for the latter's IBF lightweight title has been put on hold as Barrera waits for the outcome of next Sunday's Pacquiao-Morales battle.

WAITING: Marco Antonio Barrera

"We are waiting to see what happens in the Pacquiao-Morales," Gomez was quoted as saying. "Barrera told us he will let us know who he will choose to fight."

Gomez said Barrera is definitely interested in another clash with Pacquiao.

"If Pacquiao wins, we are willing to make the fight happen on March 25," Gomez added. "But, if he wins and gets injured, we could wait for him for an extra month or so."

Also in the short list as Barrera's possible foes are WBO champ Jorge Barrios and WBA kingpin Vicente Mosquera.

"Marco said it would be an honor to fight a great champion like Jorge Barrios," Gomez said. "We want him to fight the best out there . . . but we will support him in wanting revenge against Pacquiao."

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

Crack foreign contingent vying in World Slasher Cup

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST COCKFIGHTING SPECTACLE, THE World Slasher Cup Invitational 8-Cock Derby, unfolds on Jan. 17 at the Araneta Coliseum. The bi-annual tournament featuring prominent sportsmen cockers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Guam, Japan, and the Philippines determines world supremacy in cockfighting. Entries from the US include those of Roger Roberts of Georgia, Ray Alexander of Alabama, Johnny Moore of Tennessee, Chuch Berry of Oklahoma, Brian Cockren of Alabama, Oscar Akins of Tennessee, Larry Barleta of California, Bobby Fairchild of California, Paul Fassoth of California, Brad Padgette of Oregon, Jason Campbell of Alabama, Peter Uren of Australia, Cris Nesmith of Alabama, Joe Stanfield of California, William LeBlanc and Richard Harris of Louisiana, Jesse Smith of Oklahoma. The derby is hosted by Pintakasi of Champions, presented by Pizza Hut and co-sponsored by Thunderbird power pellets and San Miguel Corp. B-meg Derby Ace feeds. Fight schedules have been set for the 2-cock qualifying round on Jan. 17, the 2-cock semifinals on Jan. 19 and the 4-cock finals on Jan. 21.

Judge Leo S. Reyes et al

By Percy D. Della

COMMENTARY

THIS CORNER RECENTLY POUNDED OUT a paean to sportswriters—and how the wings of words could fly them to the ends of the earth in search of stories about our athletes.

We'll fill this space today with the tale of an ex-sportswriter whose gift of words also would have taken him to places so glorious and so far.

But then he had plans of high-tailing it to his native Cagayan all along.

Leo Saddul Reyes, former sports scribe, is now a Regional Trial Court judge in his home province.

The job switch was no sweat for Leo. His father Honor was a lawyer who had served as the provincial fiscal of Ilocos Norte until his death in 1964. Brother Sid also practices law, while daughter Luz Victoria is an aspiring one.

The judge is one of the many boys in the press box whose sorties in sports journalism were cut short by other careers. North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol and retired police general Cris Maralit are among the notables.

Anyway, Judge Reyes need not twirl a six-shooter while presiding over the courthouse in Sanchez Mira, 108 kilometers from his home in Tuguegarao.

He is known in the northern reaches of Cagayan for a brand of justice that's swift but fair. The magistrate's mantra is: "If people perceive you as being honest, your work is one-half done before you even start doing it. If you are perceived as corrupt, then your work is never completely done."

His Honor hears at least 10 cases a day at RTC Sanchez Mira, with jurisdiction over the towns of Claveria, Pamplona, Santa Praxedes and Sanchez Mira.

By his own account, he is labeled "nasingpet" (kindhearted) by lawyers who argue their cases in his sala. But he says he is a stickler for court decorum and a resolve to act on a case on time—a trait he developed meeting deadlines as a wire service sportswriter.

"Life on the bench is as hectic as a Manila rush hour," Judge Reyes told us over the phone last week. "It is the fastest way to becoming bald."

He intimated that deciding on a case is akin to covering both sides of a story. "The big difference is you have to chose which one is true."

In 1973, Leo S. Reyes was a press aide to the late Senator Ambrosio Padilla at the now defunct forerunner of what today is the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Two years later, he plunged into sports writing, often running with a band of sports scribes who led near Bohemian lifestyles.

"He was the tousled lion of those gin-fueled summers," recalls INQUIRER sports columnist Recah Trinidad. "How in the world did they tame him?"

"Leo is a true-blue GI (genuine Ilocano/Ibanag)," remembers columnist Al Mendoza, also of this paper. "But he was generous to a fault settling the beer tabs."

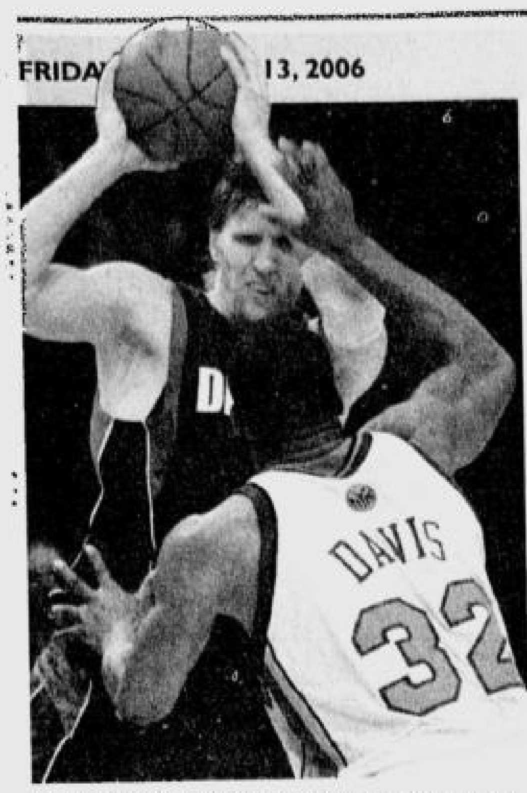
Lito Tacujan, sports editor of the Philippine Star still sees Leo as the lanky guy with bushy hair and beard. "He came to cover events with the beaming smile of a boy who had just seen his favorite cartoon character on television. He will never forget his sports connections."

More than 20 years have passed since he covered sports. "We still don't have a gold medal in the Olympics," the judge laments. "Do you think we'll have one in our lifetime?"

Like Maralit, who left the sports scene unnoticed only to re-emerge as a Constabulary officer years later, Leo, prodded by Senator Padilla, slipped into law school while his *barkada* was not looking.

Sports writing's loss was the law's gain.

Sports Note: President Macapagal-Arroyo has a sudden change of heart. She will grace the annual Philippine Sportswriters Association Awards dinner tomorrow at the Manila Pavilion after all. The last time she attended the President stayed only for a few minutes. Will her handlers allow her to linger longer this time? "*Mga isang oras daw*," reports a PSA official.



MAVERICKS' Dirk Nowitzki tries to maneuver around Knicks' Antonio Davis Wednesday. AP

Knicks survive Mavs in OT

NEW YORK—STEPHON MARBURY poured in 28 points and Jamal Crawford chipped in with 25 off the bench to lead the surging New York Knicks past the Dallas Mavericks, 117-115, in overtime on Wednesday.

Eddy Curry scored 21 points while Antonio Davis had 11 points and nine rebounds for New York, extending their winning streak to a season high five games.

Dirk Nowitzki had a game high 32 points in the loss, which snapped the Mavericks' three-game winning streak.

The Knicks forced overtime when Marbury hit two free throws at crunch time.

In Portland, Juan Dixon scored 27 points as the Trail Blazers snapped a six-game losing skid with a 113-103 win over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Kobe Bryant had a game high 41 points in the loss bringing his scoring run of 45 plus points games to an end. Bryant scored 45 or more points in four straight games.

In other games, Kevin Garnett hit 28 points, grabbed 14 rebounds and dished out nine assists as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Chicago Bulls, 99-93.

Mehmet Okur had 25 points and Andrei Kirilenko added 23 to counter a 46-point performance from Allen Iverson and help the Utah Jazz beat the Philadelphia 76ers 110-102.

Complete results:

Washington 103, Atlanta 72; Toronto 95, Charlotte 86; Indiana 112, Milwaukee 88; Utah 110, Philadelphia 102; NY Knicks 117, Dallas 115(OT); Minnesota 99, Chicago 93; Sacramento 88, Houston 80

SOLAR Sports will air the Cleveland-LA Lakers game at 11:30 a.m. It will be replayed at 9 p.m.

Tribu nips Spring Oil

PAGADIAN CITY-SKYGO/SIRLITZ TRIBU SUGBU thwarted a fiery Spring Cooking Oil rally in the homestretch to eke out a 78-75 victory Wednesday at the start of the Mayor Sammy Co Invitational basketball tournament here.

Christian Nicdao and Doroteo Almacin combined for 10 points in the payoff period as the Tribesmen repulsed the Cooking Oil Masters in the third leg of the Nature's Spring-MBC pre-season tourney.

With the Tribesmen ahead, 75-73, NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla's Spring cagers had a chance to tie when they got ball possession in the last 22 seconds. Chris Corbin's drive for the basket got blocked, however.

"We're tired from a long trip, coming from Valencia where we won the title," said Tribu coach Al Solis. "But the boys still managed to give their best against the tough Spring team."

In the other game, Michael Etrata scored five of his 13 points in the fourth quarter as Gov. Manny Pinol's North Cotabato Braves spoiled the home debut of the Pagadian Explorers, 72-68.

The event is being supported by Sulpicio Lines, Spring Cooking Oil, Molten and Prime Channel.

The Scores:

Tribu 78—Almacin 17, Bucao 16, Yabut 16, Nicdao 7, Ursal 6, Sevilla 5, Ducay 4, Cainglet 3, Luga 2, Butel 2, Calo 0, Mercado 0.

Spring 75—Rodriguez 20, Caceres 11, Yambao 9, Hubalde 8, Manuel 7, Reyes 7, Neo 6, Tingco 5, De Castro 2, Baretto 0, Corbin 0.

Quarters: 15-22, 42-42, 59-56, 78-75

Hewitt winning run ends at 22

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—LLEYTON HEWITT'S 22-match winning streak at the Sydney International ended Thursday when the top-seeded Australian was upset, 4-6, 7-5, 7-5, by Italian Andrea Seppi.

Hewitt had never lost in the ATP tournament held at the former Olympic site, winning titles in 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2005.

Seppi will play Igor Andreev in Friday's semifinals after the Russian beat compatriot Dmitry Tursunov 6-2, 3-6, 6-4.

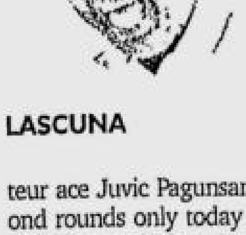
American James Blake beat Arnaud Clement of France 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 in another quarterfinal and will next play Nikolay Davydenko of Russia on Friday.

Davydenko advanced on a walkover when Thailand's Paradorn Schrichapan pulled out of his quarterfinal with a thigh injury, the eighth player to withdraw from the Australian Open tuneup tournament.

Earlier, Justine Henin-Hardenne advanced to the women's final with a 6-3, 6-1 win over 2004 US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia.

She'll play the winner of the later semifinal between Italy's Francesca Schiavone and Nicole Vaidosova of the Czech Republic. *AP*

La'O, 2 others near 3rd round



LASCUNA

JOHOR BAHRU, Malaysia— Cookie La'O, Jerome Delariarte and Tony Lascuna played steadily yesterday and seemed poised to make it to the third round of the Asian Tour 2006 Qualifying School Final Stage here.

But five other Filipinos, including amateur ace Juvic Pagunsan, will complete their second rounds only today after rains wiped out the rest of yesterday's action.

La'O rallied with a 2-under-par 70 for a 143 total, Delariarte had a 73 for 144 and Lascuna also carded a 70 for 145.

Felix "Cassisus" Casas, the only other Filipino to complete 36 holes, was in danger of missing the second round cut with 79-74--153 total.

Aside from Pagunsan (71), also returning to action are Benjie Magada (70), Marciano Pucay (71), Artemio Murakami (74) and Marlon Dizon (76).The top 100 and ties after 36 holes will make it to the third round with the top 40 players after the last round gaining Tour cards. *Asian Tour website*

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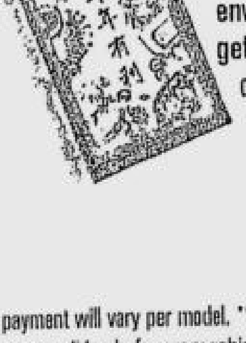
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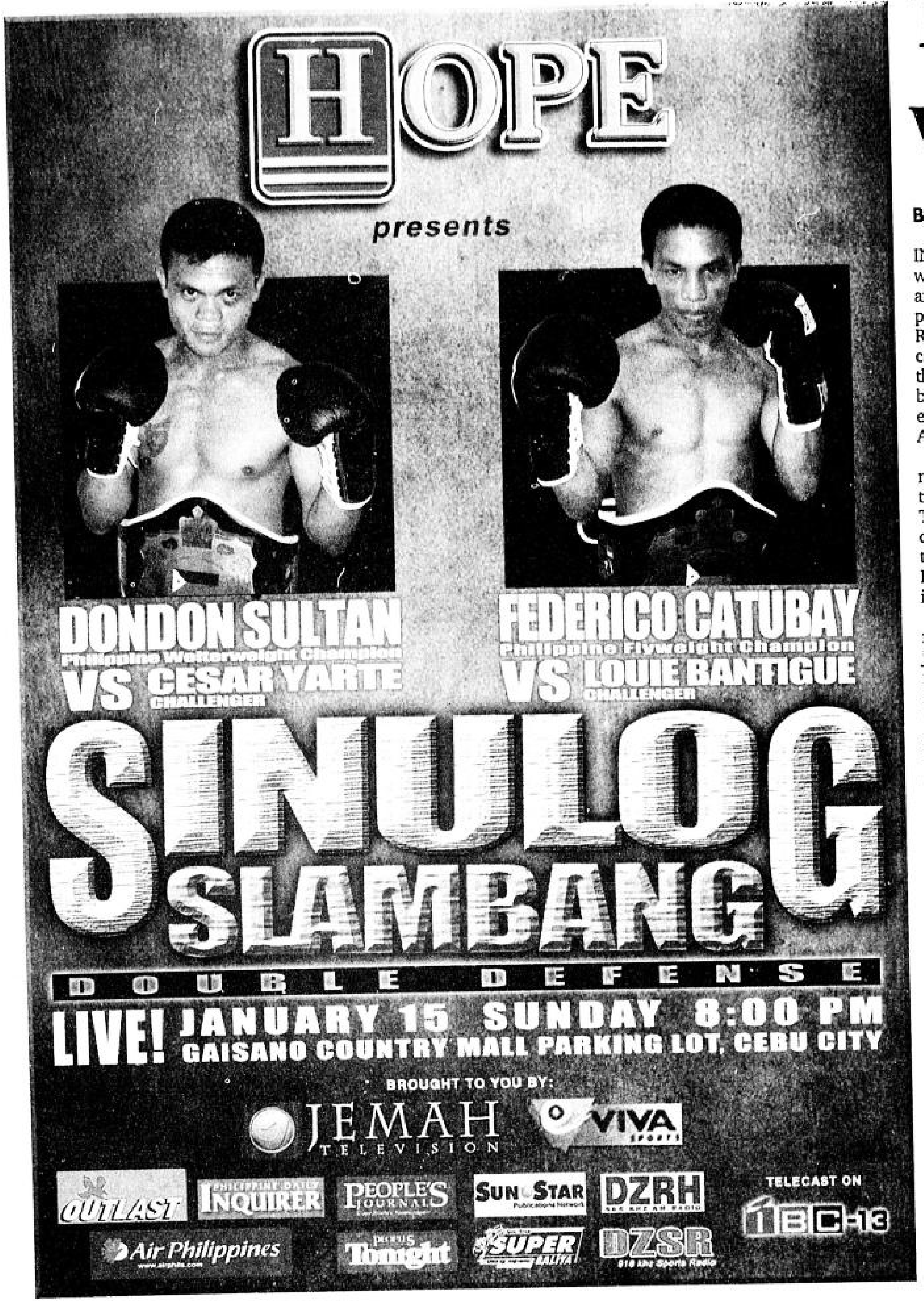

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Top int'l shuttlers vying in RP Open

By Marc Anthony Reyes

OPEN SEASON: Former First Lady Amelita "Ming" Ramos receives a bouquet of flowers from Albee Benitez, president of Bingo Bonanza Corp., major sponsor of the first Philippine Open. Others in photo are Al Alonte of Bingo Bonanza, James White of IMG and retired general Edgardo Aglipay. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

INDONESIA'S OLYMPIC AND world champion Taufik Hidayat and the popular British mixed pair of Gail Emms and Nathan Robertson head a star-studded cast expected to see action in the inaugural Philippine Open badminton championships slated March 1-5 at the PhilSports Arena in Pasig City.

World No. 1 Lin Dan of China, Pi Hongyan of France and the Netherlands' Mia Audina Tjiptawan—among the main draws of last year's MVP Cup tournament here like Hidayat, Robertson and Emms—are also in the initial list of entries.

The Philippine Open will mark the first time the country is joining the international badminton federation circuit, earning a status of four-star and with Olympic qualifying points also at stake, according to Philippine Badminton Association president Amelita "Ming" Ramos.

PBA executive vice president Edgardo Aglipay said they are confident the world-class players will be coming over because of the Olympic qualifying points for the 2008 Beijing Games.

The Open, he added, will precede the *six-star* China Masters in Beijing, which should make it a tune-up tournament for those seeing action in China.

The PBA officials also bared that the 3-by-21 rally point scoring system will be implemented in the Open as per IBF council recommendation.

"This should make the game more exciting because scoring will be faster," said Aglipay of the new system which will eliminate sideouts and increase the scoring per set from 15 to 21, similar to that of volleyball.

Ramos, the former First Lady, also announced the appointment of Errol Chan, the former grassroots development chief, as national coach replacing Martin Araneta.

Ramos said they are optimistic of the future of RP badminton despite the debacle the country suffered during the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

"We are not discouraged because the players in the SEA Games were world champions," said Ramos during yesterday's press conference held at the Holiday Inn Galleria in Pasig City.

Siblings Kenny and Kennevic Asuncion are again expected to spearhead the national team in the Philippine Open.

SPORTSWATCH

Milo chess clinics begin tomorrow

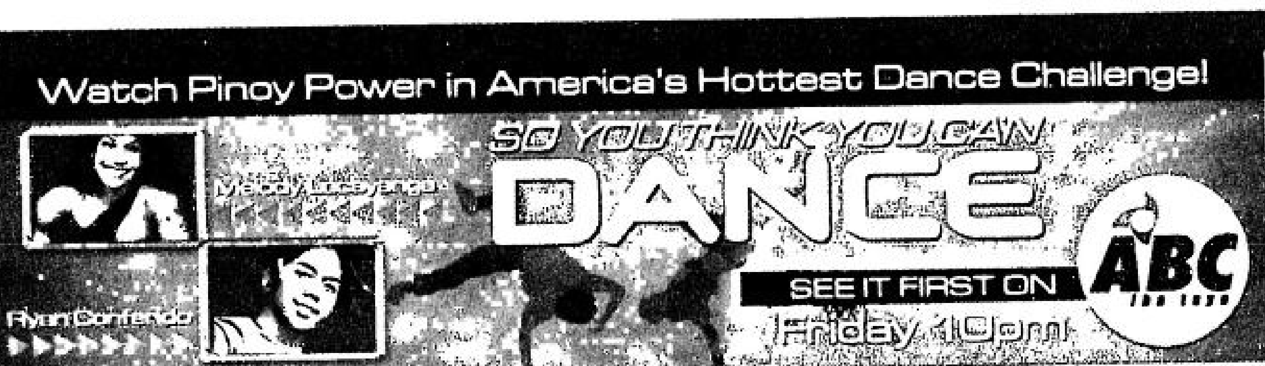
THE FIRST series this year of the Milo Checkmate Saturday-and Sunday-only chess clinics kick off tomorrow from 9 a.m. at the J&F Divino Building, 967 Aurora Boulevard (near LRT 2 Anonas Station), in Quezon City, and from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Badminton Building of the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, Vito Cruz, Manila. The clinics are open to enrollees five to 18 years old. For inquiries, call 826-8560 or 0916-852-1069.

Roligon weighs fighters today

ENTRIES in the "Kayang-Kaya 4-Cock Derby" which fires off on Jan. 31 will be weighed this morning until 10 p.m. today at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. For inquires, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812. To be hosted by Mega Promotions, at stake is P400,000. Entry fee is P6,600.

Pasay Cockers derby under way

THE RACE for the 2006 PCCA Cocker of the Year title starts today at the Pasay City Cockpit with a 4-cocker featuring 64 fights sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Reigning Cocker of the Year, Rey Briones leads a stellar group of entries in today's kick-off. For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 or 816-6750.



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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE
Friday, January 13, 2006

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	So You Think You Can Dance		Real Stories	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Kung Fu Fight Nights			Insider
AXN		Blood Crime				Worst Case Scenario		PSI Factor (Season II)		24 (Season 2)		30 Seconds To Fame	E Buzz	Half Past Dead				13 Ghosts	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Batte B-Daman	Machine Robo Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Sana Bukas Pa Ang Kahapon				Mila				Basta't Kasama Kita				Iskalawag				Soltera	
Cinemax			The Great Race (3:45 PM)						The Survivors Club			The Adventures Of Brisco County Jr			The 51st State (9:35 PM)			Empire Of The Sun (11:10PM)	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Extreme Engineering		Greatest Military Clashes		Best Of Discovery 2005						American Chopper		Beyond Tomorrow		Mostly True Stories		Crime Night	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Un-talkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Brandy & Mr. Whiskers		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN												Sportscenter Asia							
ETC		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Knock First	Ambush Makeover	Seinfeld	What I Like About You	Joan Of Arcadia		American Dreams 2		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Word Was Made Flesh	Angelus (3:15 PM)	The Donut Man	Angel Force	Suffering And The Love Of God	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Stations Of The Cross	EWTN Gallery	Super Saints	Life on The Rock Encore		Marriage Works In Christ	Defending Life	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	Father Corapi And The Catechism Of The Catholic Church	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Bubble Gang			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Judging Amy		Life On Liberty Street (3:50 PM)			Who's The Boss? II	Bewitched IV	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy		Midsomer Murders: Electric Vendetta			Doc Martin (10:35PM)		Strong Medicine (11:25PM)
HBO				The Breakfast Club			Sgt. Bilko			Grind (7:15 PM)				Lethal Weapon			Blue Crush (10:45PM)		
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Manny Pacquiao Sports Idol		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Primetime Glick	The Late Show With David Letterman		Jack In The Box				Mucha Lucha!	Beat The Geeks	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	The Late Show With David Letterman		The Late Show With David Letterman	Premium Blend	Reno 911	Insomniac W/ Dave Attell
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Ming's Quest	Intimate Portrait		Behind The Velvet Ropes	Life & Style		Guess Who's Coming To Decorate		Iron Chef America	
MTV Philippines	MTV Hits	MTV Live	MTV Hits		Trippin	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				Get Hitch'd	Get Spotted	Dyes		Wade Robson Project	Trippin	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Club MYX	MYX Versions	Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		New Year Special		Casino				Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Predators At War 1&2			
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	GSIS Member's Hour		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)		Teledyaryo				Kamao		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Muling Buksan Ang Puso				Boda De Plata				Julian Makabayan	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Ganda Ng Lola Ko		Fight Night 3				Tagos Ng Dugo
Qtv		Bodyguard	Sweet Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Hotelier	All In	Cold Case		Medium	News On Q	Love Life		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Krusada Kontra Krimen		As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Kalakaran		Newswatch Now Sony Bmg Video	TV Greats On Friday		
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping											
Solar Sports		Watson's Champions Chall Day2								Sagupaan	NBA Jam	Sportsdesk	NBA Jam	NBA Game Cavaliers @ Lakers					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus				World Game		ACC Basketball Texas Southern @ Boston College													
Star Movies	3 Ninjas Knuckle Up (2:45PM)			Opening Night (4:15PM)	The Alamo (4:45PM)					Robocop 2				Sudden Death				Soul Assassin (10:50PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	TNA Wrestling		The Collector (Series 3)		NYPD Blue		Friends	Ultimate Force
Studio 23		Rave						The Batman	Justice League Unlimited	Wazzup Wazzup		Survivor Guatemala		Barkada Nights		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

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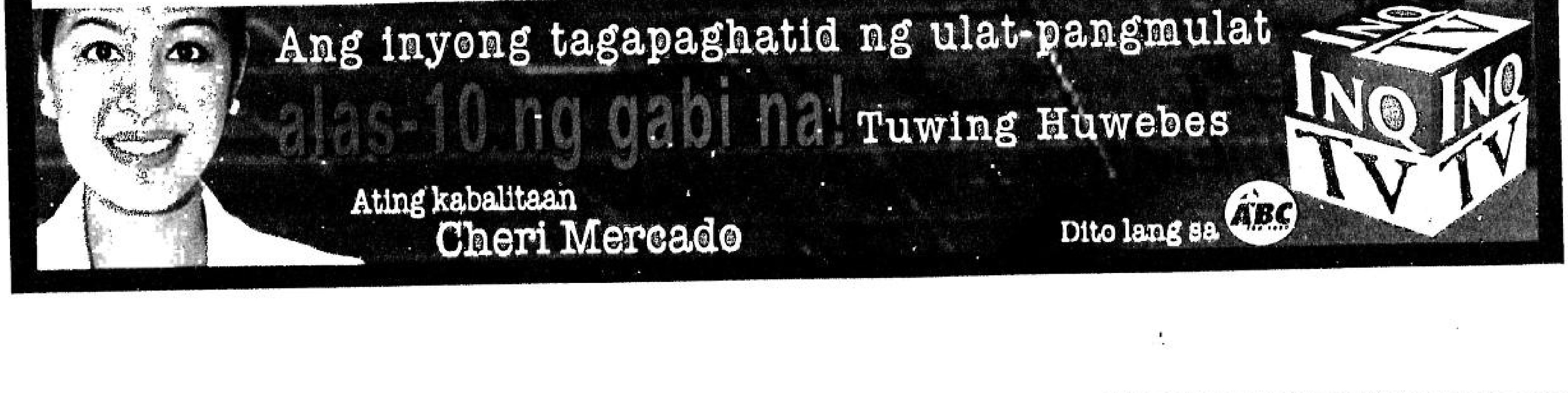

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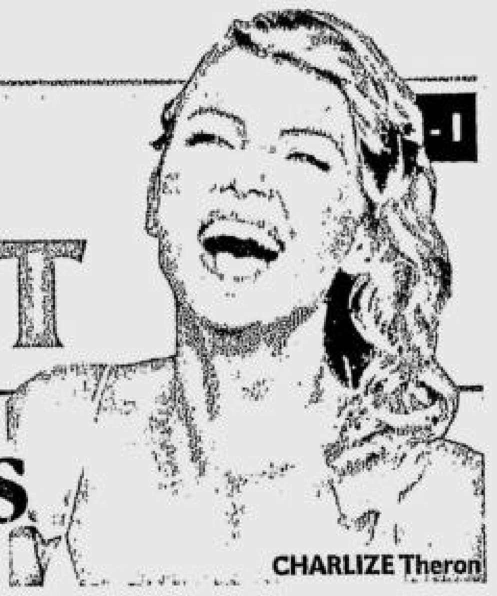


CHARLIZE Theron

Inside Globe presenters' goodie bags

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—WHAT WILL **LEONARDO DICaprio, Mariah Carey** and other presenters at this Monday's Golden Globe Awards find when they peek into their goodie bags?

For starters, how about a certificate for a $22,000 expedition to see the wildlife of the arctic on a cozy 54-cabin ship? For two weeks, Leonardo, Mariah, **Harrison Ford, Tobey Maguire, Gwyneth Paltrow** and dozens of others—if and when they use this certificate—will take a cruise to New Zealand, Antarctica and Tasmania. The adventure, arranged by Quark Expeditions, includes airfare for two to, and hotel accommodations in Argentina, where the journey begins.

Gwyneth can leave her designer duds at home—the package includes arctic gear to wear while she (or her assistant—stars have been known to give some of these goodies to *alalays*) ogles the polar landscape.

Diamonds

Renee Zellweger, another presenter, can opt for the "Diamonds of the Canadian Arctic" package, which costs a little less at, oh, a mere $15,000. This trip includes airfare for two from Edmonton, Cánada to Yellowknife, diamond capital of North America. In case Renee wants to learn how to cut and polish diamonds, there will be lessons, plus and a private tour of top-security facilities where diamonds are crafted.

The presenters will get their own engraved Canadian diamond set in a pendant. If the stone is too tiny, there's the sweepstakes where the prize is a Paul Hardy necklace valued at $5,000.

All presenters get a $2,000 diamond ring, courtesy of Chopard.

If **Jamie Foxx** or **Emma Thompson** can't get away for two weeks for that Antarctic adventure, they could settle for the Auberge de Soleil package in California's romantic wine country, Napa Valley. That's just a two-day stay, including spa treatments for two, but all that pampering costs $3,000.

Pamela Anderson can exercise her expanding-shrinking assets with a six-month bi-coastal membership at The Sports Club/LA ($4,000). This will ensure that Pamela can still fit into her Denim for Immortality jeans with an actual diamond button by Sol Raphael ($1,250).

The 2006 63rd Annual Golden Globe Awards will be aired in 150 countries, including the Philippines, via Star World—Monday in Manila, live at 9 a.m.; same-day prime time replay at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

If jeans that require its own bodyguard are a bit too much for Clint Eastwood, he can settle for a $1,200 outfit from Hugo Boss' spring/summer 2006 men's wear collection (if he gives this to his lovely wife, Dina, she can get a frock from the women's wear collection).

Dina or the likes of **Drew Barrymore** and **Jessica Alba** might complement their brand-new Hugo Boss ensemble with $800 Charlie Lapson Italian leather handbags and Philip Stein Teslar watches, described as "unisex watches that help reinforce the body's energy field to better resist the potential negative effects" of ... no, not of film critics but of "external, low-energy electromagnetic fields given off by cell phones, computers and electronics."

If all these freebies make poor Bantay feel left behind, fashion-wise, there's also Jackrocketwear Couture by **Jake Dynnis** for a canine couture outfit and carrying case with canine blanket, delicacies and spa products. That's right, spa items for Fifi and Mimi, valued at pocket change—$500.

There is also a $500 certificate for hair care, not for Fido's mane, but something that new Superman **Brandon Routh** might be able to use if all that flying manages to untangle his pomaded coif.

Lest we be accused of focusing too much on life's material rewards in this column, let me mention another item in the goodie bag labeled as "Zoe Oliver Fashion and Spiritual Jewelry." It's a gold necklace with two-faceted stones. Citrine is said to be the stone of happiness. And I thought a boffo movie box-office opening was the key to a movie star's happiness! This item is not only spiritual—it is a steal at $250 (at last, an item under $300).

You can just picture French actress **Catherine Deneuve** excitedly using her brand-new VAX USA X5 vacuum, right? Or **Lindsay Lohan** eating tubs of ice cream from Marble Slab Creamery.

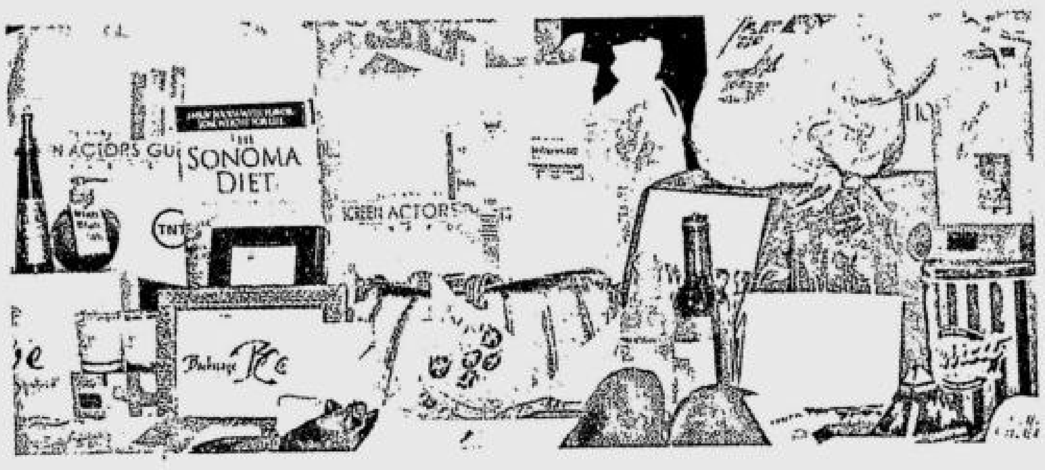
I already have a Blackberry (a toy that I asked to have on bended knees from my missus) so finally!—there's an item ($500) that I can turn my nose up at.

Too much!

There are many more, too numerous to mention. Guess the total value of these goodies that will also be given to **Natalie Portman**, Queen Latifah, **Evangeline Lilly** (the hot new star on TV's "Lost"), **Emmy Rossum, Hilary Swank** and **Denzel Washington** and several dozen others? A whopping $62,089!

Nominees like **Steven Spielberg, Charlize Theron, Felicity Huffman, George Clóoney, Scarlett Johansson, Pierce Brosnan, Johnny**

INSIDE/ A2-3



THE SCREEN Actors' Guild, meanwhile, is inviting fans to bid for contents of its celebrity goodie bags by logging on to www.sagawards.org/auc The 12th Annual SAG Awards is set on Sunday, Jan. 29. Among the goodies are getaways to a Washington State spa and VIP tickets to the LA Opera.

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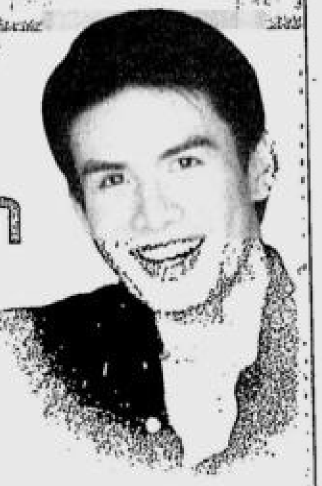

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2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

3 THE FAMILY STONE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:30 3:20 6:10 9.00

5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

6 KING KONG
11:30 3.00 6.30 10:00

7 EXODUS 12:40 3:00
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 SAINT ANGE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

10 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:20 2:45
BLUE MOON 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA
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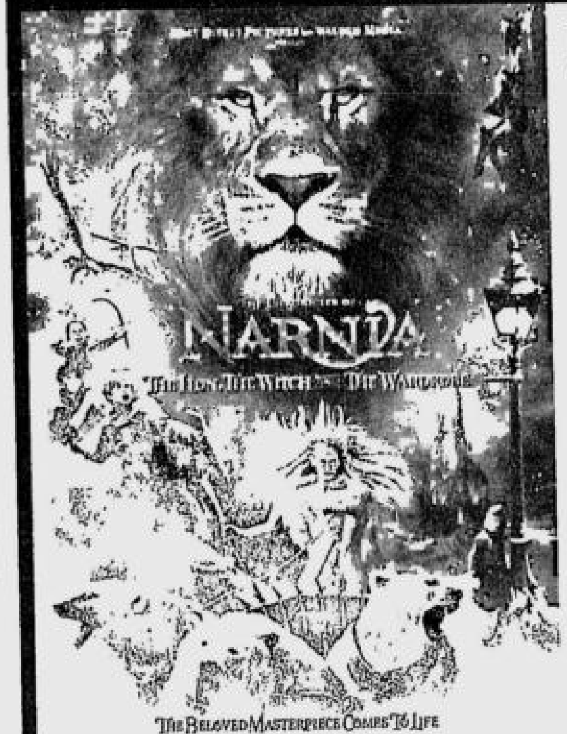
G4	GLORIETTA 4	1 FAMILY STONE	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	4 KING KONG	5 THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER	6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
GB1	GREENBELT 1	1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA					
GB3	GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	3 KING KONG GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FAMILY STONE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	4 KING KONG	5 FAMILY STONE		
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	4 THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER			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Inside Globe presenters' goodie bags …

From page A2-1

Depp, Ziyi Zhang, Eva Longoria, Teri Hatcher and regular guests like yours truly will have to make do with a goodie bag worth a paltry $1,314.

Bah, humbug

I have been tipped off that when my wife and I claim our respective bags, we should make sure that the Furla Farrah bag ($510) inside should be of different colors so my wife will not end up with two bags in the same hue. Bah, humbug! Where are the toys for men? The bag contains Lee Jeans (supposedly cowboys' jeans of choice, according to the wardrobe designer of "Brokeback Mountain"), Viktor & Rolf Flowerbomb woman's perfume, Pharmaskincare color lip gloss, In Style's "Parties" book, among others.

Where is my iPod? There is a $10 Cellboost battery charger for iPods-I guess all I'm missing is the iPod itself.

Oh well, I'll just have to look forward to the "Golden Globe foot treatment" ($100), courtesy of Dr. Bobby's Medical Foot Spa!

AA to ZZ

After **Benjamin Bratt** and **Ellen Pompeo** announced the nominations to the Screen Actors Guild Awards last week, the LA Times' **James Bates** worked hard to come up with this "Dumb awards trivia of the week: The … nominations of **Ziyi Zhang** for Best Actress in 'Memoirs of a Geisha' and Amy Adams for Supporting Actress in 'Junebug' mark the first time actresses with the initials 'AA' and 'ZZ' have been nominated."

Half-half

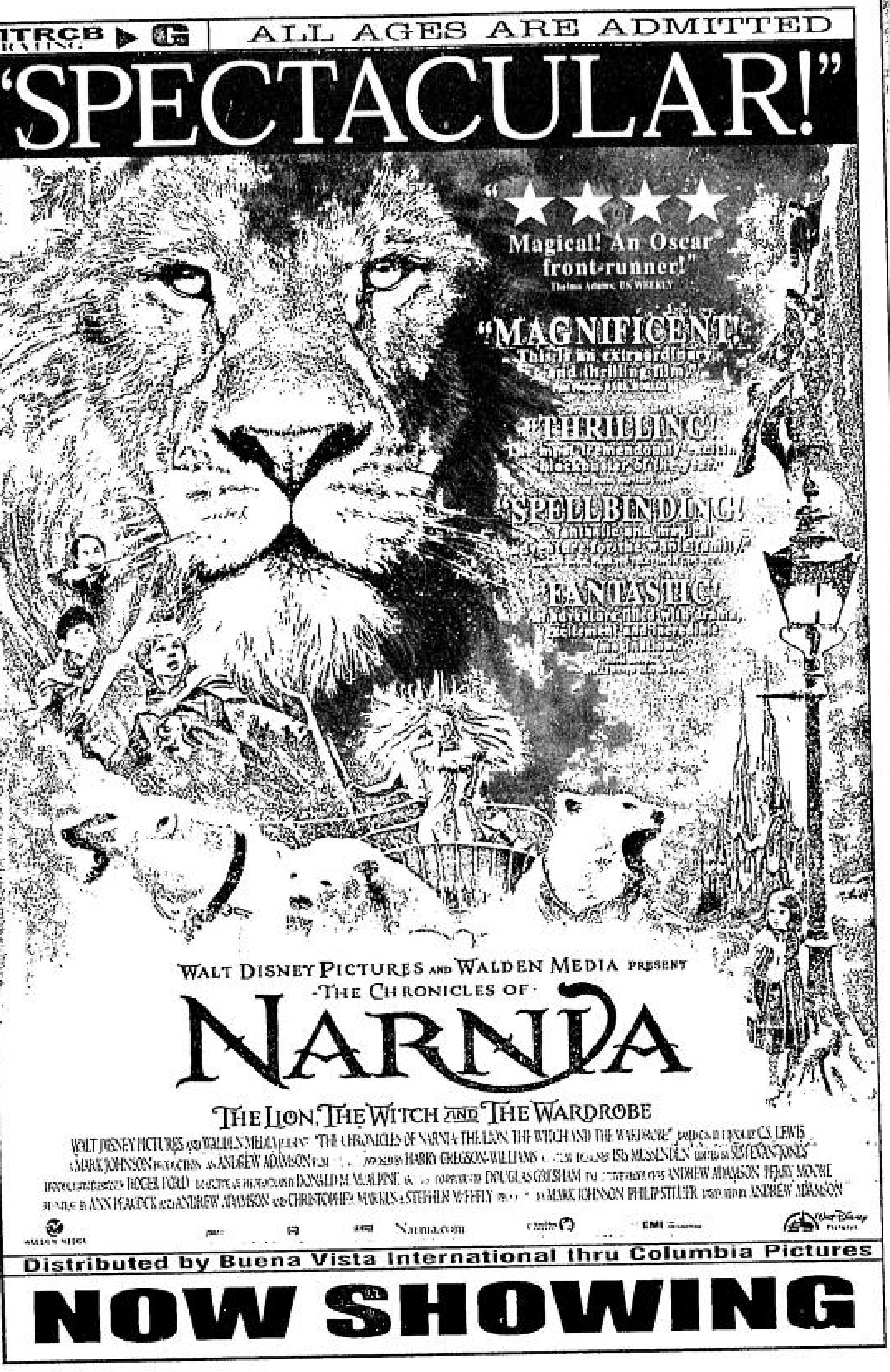
And here's **James McAvoy** reacting to our question in a New York interview on what it was like to play a half-human, half-goat in "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe" (which performed so strongly in the Philippines that even Variety noted it.)

"Well, standing on top of a mountain wearing green tights in 15 degrees Celsius in the Czech Republic, with freezing nipples that could cut your eyes out (laughter) was one of the most absurd things I've ever done in my life. I was up to my waist in real snow after spending six months pretending to be cold in fake snow in New Zealand.

"The other thing was, one day **Georgie Henley** (the cute girl who plays Lucy Pevensie) was fooling around and we were having a laugh—she kept going on and on with this story that was so obviously a fantasy story. Andrew (Adamson, the director) said, how can you take her seriously? I thought, I'm the one standing here wearing fake nose and ears, green tights, furry hot pants, hair all over me, covered in glue and you're asking me how I can take her seriously?

"The experience of being a faun was quite liberating because you realize straight away that you're not playing a human being. It gives you a kind of get-out-of-jail-free card. You can be as wacky and zany as you like."

(E-mail the columnist at rvnepales_5585@yahoo.com.)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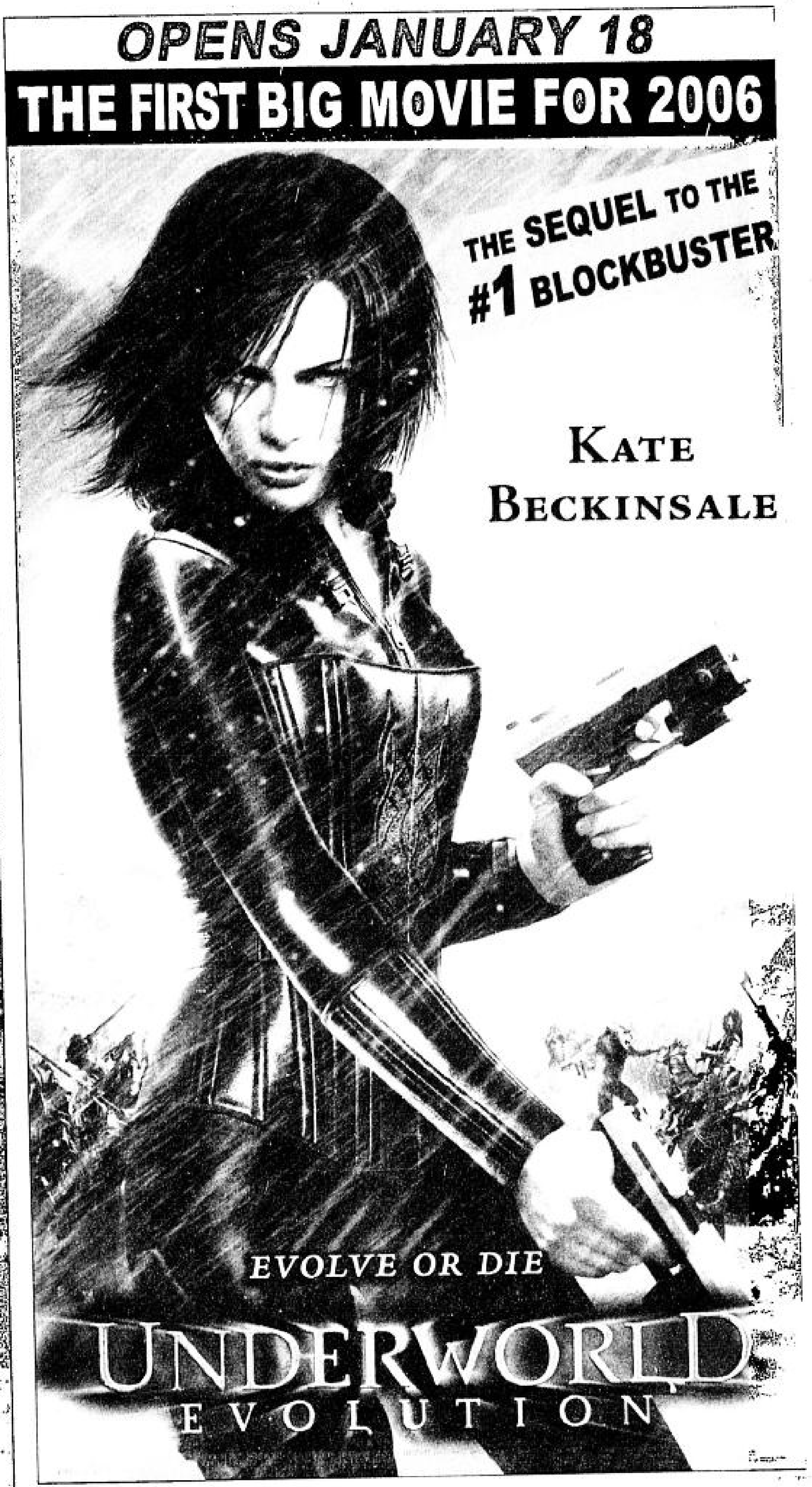
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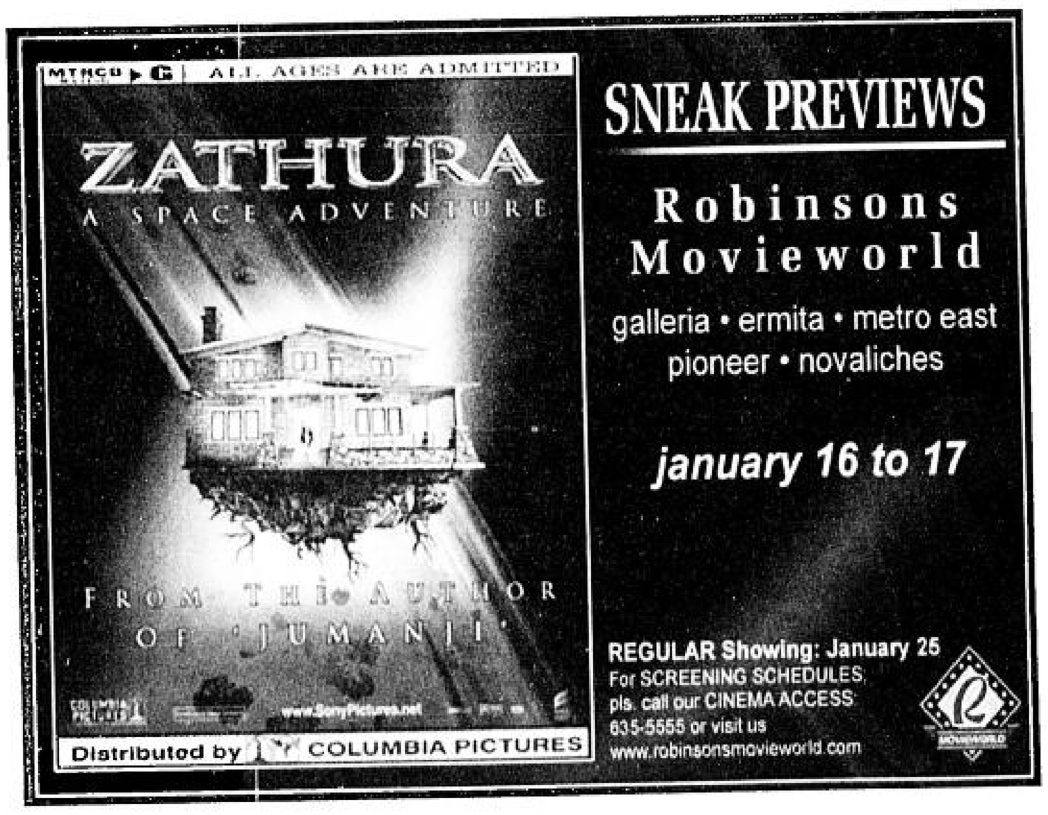
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Tieng 'quoted out of context'?

MMFF official and juror blames media for tiff with Mother Lily

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE OFFICIALS OF THE METRO MANILA Film Festival can't act on the protest raised by Regal Entertainment's Lily Monteverde because the producer has not formally filed a complaint before the film fest body, according to a member of the MMFF executive committee.

Monteverde accused the jurors of manipulating the festival awards, announced during the culminating rites held one day after MMFF member and juror Wilson Tieng was quoted in a media forecast.

The producer charged Tieng of being partial to Canary Films' "Kutob." She objected to the movie's winning the Gatpuno Antonio Villegas Cultural Award.

Monteverde was also upset that Joel Lamangan ("Blue Moon," by Regal) lost the Best Director trophy to Joey Reyes ("Kutob"). She argued that Lamangan deserved to win because "Blue Moon" bagged the Best Picture and Best Screenplay trophies.

The committee plans to resolve the issue—and "prepare for next year's event"—by reviewing the criteria for the awards, said the execom member who requested anonymity.

The source revealed that during a meeting on Tuesday, Tieng told the execom that Monteverde's accusation had hurt him and his family.

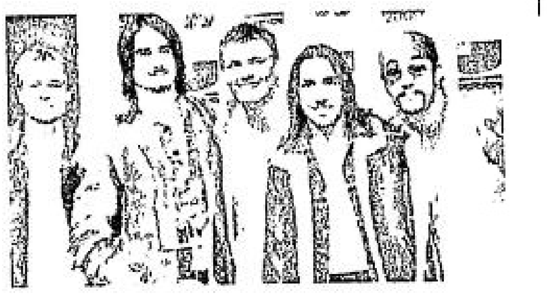
In a statement sent to INQUIRER Entertainment also on Tuesday, Tieng said he was considering legal action.

He explained that he granted interviews prior to awards night precisely because the execom had instructed him to "to drumbeat the festival activities."

Tieng argued, however, that "no single individual" could have influenced the jurors' decision.

He blamed the media for the mess, saying he had been "quoted out of context." He presumed that it was "due to space limitations."

On Monday, the execom banned Tieng from talking about the festival. The "gag order" was "lifted" on Wednesday, said the source.



Backstreet Boys to rock Araneta

THE BACKSTREET BOYS, US TEEN IDOLS, will sing their biggest hits—including "Quit Playing Games (With My Heart)," "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)," "I Want It That Way" —at the Araneta Coliseum next Friday in the concert dubbed "Never Gone." It is also the title of the boy band's latest album, a 12-track CD of all-new songs.

For tickets, call Viva Concerts and Events, 687-1125, SM Ticketnet outlets or the Araneta Coliseum, tel. 911-5555.

Winston's Wings Tour

FREESTYLE topbills Winston's 2006 Wings Tour concert today at Ratsky-Cebu.

This year's edition of the much acclaimed concert series will feature not only the country's most popular bands, but also the most promising newcomers.

Last year, the Winston: Road Rocks Tour wrapped up with the very successful "3rd Music Blast" at the World Trade Center, featuring nine of the country's top groups—Bamboo, True Faith, Freestyle, The Dawn, Kjwan, Imago, 6Cyclemind and Retrospect.

SHOW TIME

On Jan. 21, the Iloilo City edition stars True Faith; on Jan. 27, Sugarfree is the featured band at Ratsky-Tomas Morato. The shows are only for enthusiasts 18 years and older.

Spiral Starecase star returns

PAT Upton of Spiral Starecase returns to Manila for a series of concerts with Gabe Lapano of the Cascades. The shows are slated Jan. 20 at Aliw Theater, CCP Complex; Jan. 21 at the Manila Hotel; and Jan. 22 at Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, Cebu.

Local performers featured are The Song Masters—Tito Cayamanda, Vehnee Saturno, Nonoy Tan and Mon del Rosario—and Ramon "RJ" Jacinto. For tickets, call Ticketworld, 891-9999; National Bookstores, Tower Records, Ayala Malls Box Office and Robinsons.

Tonight

Jaya 10... Live!@Zirkoh, Timog Avenue, Quezon City.

Winston in Concert featuring **Freestyle** at **Ratsky-Cebu**

Band Candles and **DJ Instinct** at **Metro Phi Bar**, Metrowalk, Meralco Ave., Ortigas

True Faith and **NTwine**at **Virgin Café**, Tomas Morato, QC

Twisted Pair and **Livewire** at **Suburbia**

Route 70 at **Merk's**, Greenbelt 3

Tomorrow

Orange and Lemons in "Local Ground" at the **Bloomfield Academy** in Las Piñas. Call 874-1513.

"Behind the Mask," a mask party featuring R&B band **Rewind** at **Metro Phi Bar**, Metrowalk, Meralco Ave., Ortigas

Wiseguys and **Escape**at **Virgin Café**, Tomas Morato, QC

604 and **9th Avenue**at **Suburbia**

Marri Nallos at Hyatt Regency's **Calesa Bar**

Amadeus at **Merk's**, Greenbelt 3

"Little Big Star" Mall Tour at **Metropolis Star Alabang**; 4 p.m.

Jasmine Trias album mall tour at **SM Fairview**

Rockin' Revival at **Blue Wave** on Macapagal Avenue

January 15

Pinoy Big Brother's **Sam Milby** at **Starmall Edsa**; 4 p.m.

Jasmine Trias album mall tour at **SM Makati**

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5 GOLD THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
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8 (DOLBY STEREO) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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4 EXODUS

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
1 EXODUS
2 (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix (Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
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3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown (Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
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2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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4 (DTS) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
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2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
4 (DTS) TERRORIST HUNTER

Lianas MovieCity (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
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2 EXODUS
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Jade Cinema (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
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2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DTS ES) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Cine Nepo (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
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Berma Cinema (Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
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2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

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DON'T GIVE UP ON US PG13 12:20,2:45,5:10, 7:35,10:00	KING KONG PG13 2:40,6:20,10:00	CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP 1:10,4:10,7:10,10:10

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VIVA www.viva.com.ph www.beautifulboxer.com

Boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Host: What are your best wishes for (name of star) for the New Year?

Guest: For him, I wish *na* continue *mo lang ang* good work and humble *mo!*

(—It's the thought that counts!)

***

Host: What about for yourself?

Guest: I wish, if I join a TV contest, *makakakuha ako ng libreng* scholarship.

(What other kind of scholarship is there?)

***

Host: Are you happy with what happened to your career in 2005?

Guest: Yes, because all my hard work last year has been paid off!

(You don't say!)

***

Host: How would you describe your performance in this movie?

Guest: It's only a small part, what they call a special participation.

(No, they don't call it that.)

***

Host: Do you think (name of actress) will win an award for her performance?

Guest: I think so, because she was able to get all the emotions out!

(Wow!)

***

Host: What should we do for the New Year?

Guest: For the New Year, all of us, we need to start a new leaf!

(Start—what?)

***

Host: Will your movie be finished in time for your birthday?

Guest: I hope, but I'm not but sure if there is time.

(*Ay*, I'm not but sure!)

***

Host: How do we catch cold?

Guest: The most common is what we call a getting the virus from another person.

(No, we don't call it that…)

***

Host: What is your answer to all of the charges raised against you?

Guest: I don't pay attention to them, because all of them are alleged insinuations!

(Alleged *na*, insinuations *pa?—Malabo talaga!*)

***

Host: Why did you like the comedy movie?

Guest: Because of the actors' crazy antiques!

(The comedians were that old, huh?)

***

Host: Do you think our weightlifter will do well in the regional competition?

Guest: I'm sure, because among all the other Asian weightlifters, there is no that kind of strong!

(No that kind of strong? What in the world do you mean?)

***

Host: What is your father's occupation?

Guest: He's a religious pasture.

(Moooo!)

***

Host: Are you happy with your teammate in this contest?

Guest: Not really, because *mabilis siyang ma*-interrupt *sa kanyang pag-iisip*.

(Is that the Pinoy translation for attention deficit syndrome?)

***

Host: What do you want to say to your favorite star on his birthday on Friday?

Guest: I want to say, no matter what happen, I'm your still No. 1 fan!

(Promise, *ha?*)

FEEDBACK

Gems

From Fernando Tobias of Sta. Cruz, Laguna:

The gems in "A not-so-trivial pursuit" (Sept. 5, 2005) were very enjoyable. I am in my late 70s. and I very much liked those "facts, feats, tales and trivia." I hope… I can buy a copy of "A Movie Album Quizbook."

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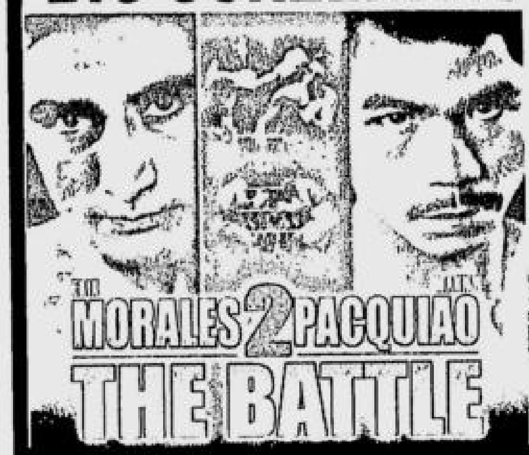

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9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11 EXODUS
12 BLUE MOON
SM CITY STA. MESA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
KING KONG
4 BLUE MOON
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
FAMILY STONE
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9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 ST. ANGE
SM CITY BICUTAN
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 KING KONG
SM VALENZUELA
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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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1 BLUE MOON
2 ST. ANGE
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3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
5 BLUE MOON
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 EXODUS
8 KING KONG
SM CITY MANILA
1 KING KONG
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
4 EXODUS
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
FAMILY STONE
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 BLUE MOON
12 ST. ANGE
SM SAN LAZARO
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 BLUE MOON
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LUZON
SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 BLUE MOON
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
SM CITY BAGUIO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
SM MOLINO
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 KING KONG
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
SM CITY BACOOR
1 ST. ANGE
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 KING KONG
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 BLUE MOON
EXODUS
SM CITY MARILAO
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
KING KONG
SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 THE CAHRONICLES OF NARNIA
EXODUS
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
SM CITY LUCENA
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
KING KONG
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
SM CITY BATANGAS
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
EXODUS

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO
SM CITY CEBU
1 HANDUMANAN
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 KING KONG
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
BLUE MOON
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS
MULAWIN THE MOVIE
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
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THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
KING KONG
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
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SM CITY DAVAO
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3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS
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ENTERTAINMENT

ELLEN DeGeneres video tapes herself onstage.

US People's Choice

DeGeneres, Garner, Depp, Bullock, Pitt, 'Star Wars,' 'CSI,' 'American Idol'...

MATTHEW McConaughey

SANDRA Bullock, "Favorite Female Movie Star"

LOS ANGELES—THE FORCE WAS WITH "Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith," which was named Favorite Movie and Favorite Movie Drama at Tuesday night's 32nd annual People's Choice Awards.

Talk show host Ellen DeGeneres and TV star Jennifer Garner also won multiple awards. Garner, of TV's "Alias" and the action movie "Elektra," got the nod for Female Action Star and Female TV Star.

DeGeneres was honored as Favorite Daytime Talk Show Host and Funny Female Star, the same awards she took home last year.

Johnny Depp was again named Favorite Male Movie Star, although Sandra Bullock took Female Star honors over Angelina Jolie and Nicole Kidman. Last year's winner, Julia Roberts, wasn't in the running.

Brad Pitt returned as Favorite Leading Man.

On TV, the favorites included "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "American Idol" and "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition"—all repeats.

The People's Choice Awards were presented at the Shrine Auditorium and broadcast live on CBS.

The nominations were determined by editors at Entertainment Weekly, the People's Choice production team and a panel of pop culture fans. Winners were determined by Internet voting.

The rest of the winners:

MOVIES

Leading Lady—Reese Witherspoon; Male Action Star—Matthew McConaughey; Onscreen Match-Up—Vince Vaughn & Owen Wilson ("Wedding Crashers"); Movie Comedy—"Wedding Crashers"; Movie Drama—"Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith"; Family Movie—"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"; Movie—"Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith."

MUSIC

Female Performer—Kelly Clarkson; Male Performer—Tim McGraw; Group—Green Day; Tour—U2; Song From a Movie—"These Boots Are Made For Walkin'," as performed by Jessica Simpson in "The Dukes of Hazzard."

TELEVISION

New TV comedy—"My Name is Earl"; New TV drama—"Prison Break"; Comedy—"Everybody Loves Raymond"; Drama—"CSI: Crime Scene Investigation"; Reality show, competition—"American Idol"; Reality show, others—"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition"; Late night talk show host—Jay Leno; Male TV star—Ray Romano.

OTHERS

- Funny Male Star: Adam Sandler
- Crest Whitestrips Fans Favorite Smile: Cameron Diaz
- Nice 'N Easy Fans Favorite Hair: Faith Hill
- Olay Total Effects Fans Favorite Look: Jennifer Aniston.

AP

ROUNDUP

'Worst Dressed'

LOS ANGELES—Singer Britney Spears snagged the top spot Tuesday in Mr. Blackwell's 46th annual "Worst Dressed" list for wearing clothes that he said made her look like an "over-the-hill Lolita."

Other offenders on Blackwell's list of fashion flops included Mary-Kate Olden, Eva Langoria, Jessica Simpson, Mariah Carey, Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Renee Zellweger.

Rich kid

"MALCOLM in the Middle" teen actor Justin Berfield is buying the "Newlyweds" home of divorcing Hollywood couple Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey.

Berfield, 19, is the bullying middle child Reese on Fox Television's "Malcolm in the Middle." He's single.

The sales price wasn't disclosed by Berfield publicist Hope Diamond, but it was listed for $3.75 million.

Pass it on

BILLY Crystal said he passed on the Oscar hosting job that went to Jon Stewart because his one-man stage show is consuming his attention.

Academy Awards producer Gil Cates repeatedly asked, "Please do the show," calling as late as just before Christmas, Crystal said. But his Tony Award-winning "700 Sundays" was his first priority.

"I'm so tired at the end of '700 Sundays,'" Crystal told the Los Angeles Daily News. "I didn't want to go from that into a meeting where I'm saying, 'Give me "Brokeback Mountain" jokes.' It seemed so not what I wanted to do."

The 78th annual Academy Awards will air March 5 on ABC from Hollywood. AP

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Gokongweis had GSIS for lunch /B3

CAB suspends Tiger permit /B6

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Editor Raul O. Marcelo
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Traders lose out on VAT cap rate appeal

DOF cites potential abuse, tax leaks in changing uniform rate

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS JUNKED THE PROposal of the business community to set different VAT cap rates for various industries, saying that changes in the uniform rate of 70 percent could lead to abuse and tax leaks.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the DOF would no longer pursue the proposed setting of different value-added tax cap rates for each industry because it did not see much benefit from the proposal.

"It is difficult to have different rates because some businesses may ... make it appear that they are covered by a rate more favorable for them," Beltran said.

Earlier, some members of the business community strongly lobbied to be covered by a VAT cap rate higher than 70 percent. The businessmen claimed that the existing rate was anti-growth.

They also said a VAT cap rate should be determined based on the capability of an industry to generate profits and should not be uniform.

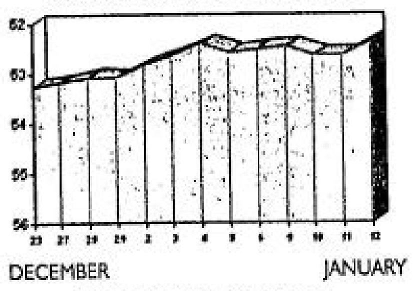
The 70-percent VAT cap, as provided for in the VAT Reform Law that took effect last November, requires that a taxpayer could only claim input VAT credits of up to a maximum amount equivalent to 70 percent of its output VAT.

Input VAT is the amount of VAT that a company shoulders every time it purchases goods or services, where the prices include the 10-percent VAT. Input VAT is deductible from one's VAT liabilities, or output VAT.

TRADERS/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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STOCK MARKET

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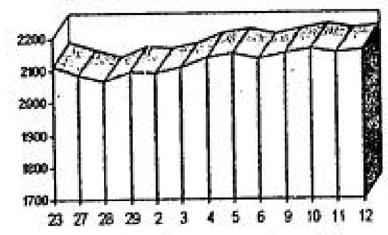

(See stock market report on Page B5)

Stocks rise 0.4%

STOCKS YESTERDAY ROSE AS investors took advantage of the previous session's retreat to hunt for bargains.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index rose 7.94 points, or 0.4 percent, to 2,158.65, after shedding 0.5 percent Wednesday.

"Technically, the market's upward trend over the long term is intact," said DA Market Securities President Nestor Aguila. "The appetite for stocks is still there."

All sectoral indicators advanced, except the all shares subindex, which retreated. Gainers led decliners 56 to 23, while 56 stocks were unchanged. *AP*

Pera threatens to eat into gov't revenues, DOF claims

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE ESTIMATED that the government stands to lose about P10 billion annually from a proposed measure granting generous fiscal incentives to individuals who choose to open pension plans.

There is a proposal in the Senate called the Personal Equity and Retirement Account (Pera) bill that encourages an individual to open a personal retirement account or voluntary pension plan with a chosen financial institution. The bill grants tax privileges to anyone who will open a Pera.

Under the proposal, which is backed by the central bank and other financial institutions, exemption from the 20-percent tax on investment incomes arising from Pera would lead to a potential revenue loss of as much as P8.82 billion every year, according to DOF data.

The amount would be on top of the expected P1.22-billion tax collection loss from the proposed preferential tax treatment of Pera accounts.

The bill states that individuals with Pera accounts are granted a 5-percent tax credit. The tax credit would mean that, if an individual has P50,000 in his or her Pera, he or she would be allowed to deduct P2,500 (5 percent of P50,000) from his or her total tax liabilities.

PERA/ B5

Key policy rates kept for third straight month

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY BOARD YESTERDAY VOTED to keep its key overnight rates steady for the third straight month given easing inflationary pressures, appreciating peso, softening oil prices and ample food supply.

The overnight borrowing rate or reverse repurchase rate was maintained by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' policy-making body at 7.5 percent and the overnight lending or repurchase rate at 9 percent during its monthly policy rate setting yesterday.

Recent evidence of easing inflation pressures supports an unchanged policy setting, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

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'Hotdog king' brings home an American dog

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

SO MANY IN THE SAME business have come and gone. Those who went into it even included major corporations with strong financial muscles but did not fare as well.

After almost 20 years, Rene P. de Leon's business remains and is going strong. But he does not quite know why his business survived while others did not.

During the early '80s when his girlfriend, now his wife, Amy, was still working at the then Central Bank of the Philippines (now Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas), Rene noticed some employees were wearing designer shoes and expensive watches.

He wondered how government employees, with their generally low salaries, could afford such luxuries. So he asked around and found out some of these employees were entrepreneurs on the side—owning food stalls or kiosks in the Harrison Paza mall, which is just across the Central Bank office.

At that time he and Amy were planning to get married and were looking for other sources of income. He decided to set up a food stall.

Rene says he likes hotdogs. He recalls his college days when he would simply dip the cold hotdog on the dining table into his coffee to warm it and gobble this before going to school. He also recalls the pile of hotdogs in stalls at the Edsa Central which seemed to be selling well.

MARK, Erick, Amy, Cesca and Rene de Leon

He thought of opening a stall that would sell hotdogs.

He approached Rustan's, which then had a supermarket in Harrison Plaza, to get a slot in its eating area.

Rustan's approved his application but suggested he might want to sell other things so he added barbecue to his menu.

When Rene set up Hotdog on Sticks, he was working with Citibank. He often checked the stall during lunch break and stayed in the bank until closing time of the supermarket to collect the day's earnings.

His parents, although entrepreneurs, did not believe in the business idea. Even his then future mother-in-law was doubtful, citing that he was renting a very small area for P6,000 a month while she was paying the same amount for a 100-square-meter cafeteria she was running at the airport.

The only one who supported Rene's plan was an uncle, a part-owner of Max's restaurant. The uncle lent him money and asked that he be the one to supply Rene with the buns for the hotdog sandwiches. The uncle was just setting up the bakery of Max's.

Rene opened the first outlet in 1984. First day sales were depressing—P200. But it slowly increased to P500, P1,000. On his wedding day, sales jumped to P10,000.

But the expansion of Hotdog on Sticks was slow—about one outlet a year between 1984 and 1987. His conservative stance was due to the fact that suddenly, "every Tom, Dick and Harry went into the business," Rene says.

Nathan's
FRANKFURTER
ROAST BEEF
HAMBURGER
5
MALTED MILK
MILK SHAKE
6
SODA
5
ICE CREAM SODA
10

THE FIRST Nathan's Famous hotdog stand in Coney Island, New York, opened in 1916.

Thirteen years later, in 1997, he only had 15 stands. At that time big businesses were into the fast-food hotdog business—Purefoods with Smokey's; RFM with Orange Julius.

Most of the big ones however have since decreased their outlets and the other players closed shop.

Hotdog on Sticks, on the other hand, started expanding when the others started decreasing their outlets. As of Dec. 14, 2005, it had 125 outlets all over the country. Every time a new SM opens, they are invited to set up one in the mall.

Industry sources have pointed out that taipan Henry Sy always offers spaces to his tenants at SM North Edsa when opening a new mall because he feels they were the ones who were willing to take the risk with him when he built the North Mall during crisis time. Hotdog on Sticks was one of its first tenants.

Last year, Rene introduced the popular Nathan's Famous hotdogs in some of its Hotdog on Sticks outlets. Nathan's is an 85-year-old hotdog introduced in Coney Island, New York, by a Polish immigrant, Nathan Handwerker, using a hotdog recipe developed by his wife, Ida.

Rene says many foreigners, especially Americans, do not like local hotdogs because the ingredients used are very different. He says he hopes to capture the expatriate market with Nathan's which is a household name in the US.

For its local hotdogs, Rene has since made its own via toll manufacturing. It plans to further expand its outlets nationwide. With over a hundred outlets and his own manufacturing, Rene could well be the country's "hotdog king."

Ventures for P500,000 or less

MANY FILIPINOS TODAY ARE IN SEARCH of business and investment opportunities. We checked out the website of the Association of Filipino Franchisers Inc. and came up with the following options for those with P100,000 to P500,000 to invest.

Pick & Mix by: Candy Mix

Started in February 1996, Candy Mix Plus Inc. is the first candy specialty store in the country, pioneering sale of candies by weight through the pick and mix basis. Hence, its trade name "Pick & Mix by Candy Mix".

In 2002, it was taken in by SM Toy World and Toy Kingdom as a consignor for its party favors section. A year after, it launched its franchising program.

To date, Candy Mix has more than 30 branches (company-owned and franchises) located both in Metro Manila and the provinces.

Areas open for franchise: Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and key cities in Mindanao

Franchise Fee: Candy stand-P190,000; Candy cart-P330,000 (investment package)

Contact: Mike M. Isada, tel. no. 628-2298 or telefax 641-6998

E-mail: candymix_96@yahoo.com

Kanin ni Tisay

Dubbed as "Asian fast food in a box", Kanin ni Tisay is not only a filling meal but also an affordable deal.

KNT started out with a small cart selling boxes of rice meals in malls. Eventually, the menu expanded to include noodles, cuaninis (grilled cuapao ala panini), barbeques and merienda fare.

To date, KNT has 7 outlets in high traffic locations such as schools, gasoline stations, bus and MRT stations.

Franchise fee: P250,000

Contact: Jorge Noel Y. Wieneke III, tel. 895-0642 / 895-0619, fax 895-0046

Fiorgelato

Milkin Corporation was formed in 1989 under a Filipino-Italian venture as a manufacturer of "designer" ice cream products for top hotels, restaurants and food chains.

Granted the exclusive rights from Italy to manufacture, sell and distribute to the local market, Milkin gave birth to the brand Fiorgelato.

Dubbed as the "Pure Italian Ice Cream", Fiorgelato is made of 100 percent pure fresh milk, as well as other high quality ingredients imported from Italy.

The brand introduces an array of authentic Italian flavors like Cappuccino, Straciatella, Menta and Cioccolato.

Franchise fee: P150,000 (franchise package)

Contact: Lhiza Hernandez, telefax 524-0384/524-0385

Chicharific by Lapid's

"Chicharific" by Lapid's food carts are known for their delicious crunchy chicharon and imported-quality products.

Founded in 1997 by sisters Erlinda Lapid Dioquino and Estrelita Lapid Montanido, "Chicharific" uses only the finest raw materials and cooking procedures.

(It was their father who started and popularized the name "Lapid's" as the leading manufacturer and retailer of chicharon in 1977.)

Aside from regular chicharon varieties, Crispy Pata (crispy pig's thigh) and Crispy Ulo (crispy pig's head) are also available.

Areas open for franchise: Provincial outlets

Franchise Cost: Cart type-P200,000; store space-P100,000 + leasehold improvements

Contact: Erly Dioquino or Arthur Adams C. Demain, tel. 645-7936 ; telefax: 677-8467

Email: chicharific@yahoo.com

Julie's Bakeshop

Julie's began in 1981 as a mom-and-pop type of business by Rodrigo and Julia Gandionco at Wireless, Mandaue City, Cebu.

Julie's has since grown to become a household name, famous for its hourly fresh-baked breads.

To date, it boasts of an estimated market share of more than 60 percent in the bakery franchise business. It has more than 300 stores, 99 percent of which are franchised.

Areas open for franchise: Metro Manila, Luzon

Franchise fee: P250,000

Contact: Roberto R. Gandionco, president; Virgilio G. Espleta, Gen. Manager, Franchise Div. tel. (032) 261-7117 to 19 ; telefax (032) 261-3326 Manila

E-mail: fdo_jfc@mozcom.com

Website: www.juliesbakeshop.com.ph

Lots' A Pizza

Having been in the fast-food industry for more than 20 years, Lots' A Pizza Franchise Systems Inc. proves that all big things do start small. Aiming for the middle market, Lots' A Pizza was able to carve a niche in the pizza industry with its very own, unique mixture of tomato sauce, herbs and spices.

Since it opened its first franchise store in 2000, Lots' A Pizza has grown to more than 50 outlets, making it one of the fastest growing pizza franchises in the country today.

It also has an HACCP-compliant commissary ensuring strict adherence to good manufacturing practices and high-standard sanitation procedures.

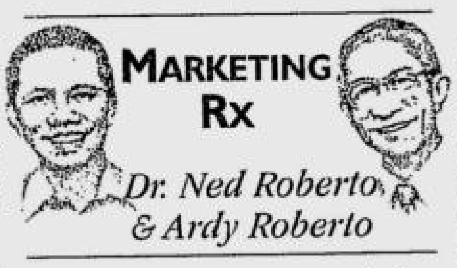
Areas open for franchise: Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, Pampanga

Franchise fee: P300,000-P500,000 (total franchise capitalization requirement)

Contact: Robert Ngan Tian, Franchise Director; Teresita L. Ngan Tian, VP/Treasurer, tel 873-8435 Telefax 873-8414, 872-9122 E-mail: lotsapizza@pacific.net.ph

(For more franchise opportunities check out www.filfranchisers.com)

Business and branding advice from Al Ries - I



MARKETING Rx

Dr. Ned Roberto & Ardy Roberto

WE'VE GOT GREAT NEWS FOR OUR readers. This MarketingRx father and son team will be hosting the father and daughter team of Al Ries and Laura Ries when they visit Manila on June 23 for a one-day Brand Management Conference presented by The Inquirer Executive Seminar Series.

Al Ries (pronounced "Reese") is perhaps one of the best known marketing strategists in the world. He is the author of the international best-sellers, Positioning (check out the 20th year Anniversary edition of Positioning at Powerbooks), Marketing Warfare, 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing, (all co-authored with Jack Trout) and recently, 22 Immutable Laws of Branding, The Rise of PR and the Fall of Advertising and The Origin of Brands (both co-authored with Laura Ries).

Business magazines and marketing associations the world over have voted Al Ries as one of the top 10 most influential business gurus in the world (along with Tom Peters, Michael Porter, Jim Collins, and Phil Kotler).

We've asked them if we could publish their answers to the most frequently asked questions about marketing and branding. This MarketingRx column will host their answers every other week until the end of June. So send your questions for Al Ries and Laura Ries and we'll get their answers!

Q: I am tasked to grow a business (as group product manager) with a limited advertising budget. How were brands such as Starbucks, The Body Shop, and Wal-Mart built on virtually no advertising?

Ries: How do you build a brand anyway? You build a brand by word of mouth. One person tells another. But how do you get that first mouth going? Invariably by publicity. What drives word of mouth is PR. A story in a newspaper or magazine. A mention on radio or television. PR first, advertising second is the best approach. First use PR techniques to establish the credibility of your brand. Then switch to advertising to maintain that perception. The real issue in marketing is how to generate publicity. Invariably you need to create a category you can be first in. Starbucks was the first European-style coffee house. The Body Shop was the first store to focus on "natural" cosmetics. Wal-Mart was the first discount store in smaller communities. (Kmart, the first discount store, refused to open outlets in communities with under 50,000 population). When you are first, you make news which generates publicity which builds your brand. This is the essence of the PR approach to brand building.

Q: How can you expand your business while still keeping a focus?

Ries: Ask yourself, do you dominate your business? We work with many companies that have five or ten percent of a market, and they will want to increase sales by getting into other markets. If you can't increase your sales in a market you know something about, how are you going to increase your sales in a market you know nothing about? Here is our general approach for expanding a business while keeping a focus. First, you want a better strategy for your existing market so you become the dominant leader. Second, you want to expand geographically while maintaining that narrow focus. Eventually you want to be global. Even the smallest business in the world can be a global competitor. Almost 50 percent of our business, for example, is outside of the US. Once you have dominated your market and expanded to a global force, the next thing to do is to launch a second brand. But too many people want to do this first. There are too many small companies with too many brands. You really shouldn't launch a second brand until you are a powerful world-wide force.

Q: I've read your 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing and the 22 Immutable Laws of Branding. How come General Electric is successful even though they seem to violate most of your principles?

Ries: This is probably the question we are asked most frequently. Actually there are a number of reasons:

1) GE is a 108-year-old company that got into minds when there was a lot less competition.

2) GE is the fifth largest company in America.

3) GE focuses only on businesses where they can be number one or number two.

4) For the most part, GE's competitors are also conglomerates with the same positioning liabilities that GE has.

5) GE avoids tomorrow-type businesses where the competition would kill them. Software, computers, telecommunications, networks, mobile phones etc. Notice, too, they didn't change the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to the GE Broadcasting Company (GEBC.) When your company is 108 years old, when your company is the fifth largest company in the US, when your businesses are either number one or number two in their fields, when your company wants to give up on the future, by all means, use the GE strategy.

Q: To what extent can it be a focus to be the best in a selected attribute? A mixer for the kitchen, for example, says "the world's strongest" (all may be strong, but they claim to have the strongest). Could an advertising agency use the same approach and say, for example, "more effective advertising". If yes, why so? If no, why not?

Ries: The more general and broad the concept, the more difficult it would be to establish the idea. "More effective advertising" would be extremely difficult for any one advertising agency to claim, because everybody else is saying the same thing. The other question to ask yourself is what does the consumer want? Does a consumer want a strong mixer? I doubt it, but it may be so.

Does every service business have to be a very specialized business, or can it use "full-service" as a focus? Or, to put it another way, could a "Full-Service-Business" use "reliability" or "easy handling" (for example) as focus?

"Full service" can be a focus, but will probably not represent the biggest slice of the market. Department stores can be viewed as "full service" stores, but they don't sell nearly as much merchandise as the discount stores and the specialists.

Q: How is it that IBM was the leader in computers at the same time that they were the leader in office typewriters? Doesn't this violate your rules about line extension?

Ries: Last time we noticed, IBM had a monopoly on the Selectric typewriter. If you have a monopoly, the rules of marketing get thrown out the window. Look at Microsoft.

Q: How is it that Honda's focus on cars doesn't seem to have hurt them in motorcycles?

Ries: Last time we counted, Harley-Davidson was the leading motorcycle brand, not Honda. Also in Japan, Honda automobiles are a poor third to Toyota and Nissan. In the U.S. most people think of Honda as an automobile. In Japan, most people think of Honda as a motorcycle which accounts for Honda's poor position in cars in Japan.

Q: How is Pizza Hut the leader when they seem to have no focus?

Ries: Pizza Hut is the leader because they were first. The truth is they might be better off if they got out of the delivery business and focused on their restaurants. According to some statistics, Pizza Hut made little if any money on their delivery business.

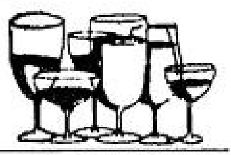
Q: How do you explain the success of Diet Coke, a line extension?

Ries: Diet Coke competes with another line-extended product called Diet Pepsi. So the winner is obviously going to be a line-extended product. The customer doesn't refuse to buy line extensions, they simply buy the "best" brand they can. Our opinion is that a non-line-extended name is more powerful than a line-extended one. So if there were a non-line extended brand in the diet soda market it would be the winner. Actually there used to be a non-line-extended brand of diet cola: it was TAB (made by Coca-Cola.) Guess what? TAB out sold Diet Pepsi by 32 percent.

Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at MarketingRx@pldtDSL.net or text us at 0919-314-5412. God bless!

Gokongweis had GSIS for lunch

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

TAIPAN JOHN GOKONGWEI JR. AND HIS brother James were seen with fellow Cebuano and another weight-watcher candidate, GSIS president Winston Garcia, helping themselves to the generous lunch-buffet spread at the Crowne Plaza's coffee shop Tuesday.

Garcia, who holds office in the Roxas Boulevard. reclaimed area, apparently had been served with more than food after he battled the traffic to Ortigas and possibly the dietitian's advice to see the Gokongweis.

"We discussed many things," said Mr. John, breaking into hearty laughter, when informed that he had been spotted cozying up to Mr. GSIS.

The Gokongwei family was a major shareholder of PCIBank before it was swallowed, with the help of the Government Service Insurance System, by the smaller Equitable Bank during the Erap era.

Asked if the fate of a certain bank was part of the post-prandial discussions, Mr. John answered, "My chief concern was the Philcomcen building," referring to the half-demolished building half-owned by GSIS that now threatens,—knock on wood—to collapse in front of the gleaming Gokongwei hotel.

"That building is not only an eyesore, it is also an accident waiting to happen," the clearly agitated billionaire said. After a little badgering, Mr. John finally admitted that Equitable PCIBank did figure in his talks with Garcia, but preferred to keep his thoughts between him and the GSIS chief.

"Look, if Winston (Garcia) and I were cooking up something, I would not discuss it in front of a hundred people," Mr. John said, referring to the lunchtime crowd at the Seven Corners cafe.

According to the grapevine, the taipan had considered buying back Equitable PCIBank at nearly half the price early in the Arroyo years when it was sailing through financial difficulties.

But the taipannic ambition was said to have been held in check by his son, Lance, and Mr. James, who both did not relish the additional administrative burdens of turning around a universal bank amid thinning industry spreads, while at the same time juggling with the increasingly regional ambitions of the JG Summit/Universal Robina/Cebu Pacific groups.

Still, the taipan kept a special eye on the bank and was apparently kept abreast of developments, courtesy of his friend and travel companion, Antonio Go, who was Equitable PCIBank chair until his last year's surrender to the financial entreaties of SM/Banco de Oro heiress Teresita Sy.

An improved Arroyo

SENATOR Joker Arroyo's fiscalizing footsteps are apparently not being shared by his eldest daughter.

Ma. Antonia Odelia Arroyo, 27, has instead chosen to wade in the uncharted waters of biotechnology, establishing the first biotechnology consulting firm in the Philippines, Hybridigm Consulting, after obtaining a master in bioscience enterprise degree from Cambridge on a UK government scholarship.

Hybridigm has tied up with United Laboratories in sponsoring the 2nd Philippine conference on biotechnology enterprise and investment on Jan. 17 to 20.

Featuring American and British scientists, the conference will discuss how the Philippines, considered one of the most biologically rich countries, could tap into the $250-billion-a-year business.

Among the recent local biological breakthroughs that have multibillion-dollar applications are the 1990s discovery by Drs. Baldomero Olivera and Lourdes Cruz of ziconotide, a non-addictive pain-killer developed from soil bacteria that is said to be a thousand times more powerful than morphine, and the waterless live fish transport technology pioneered by Bonifacio Comandante, an engineer from Silliman University.

Heard through the grapevine

THE FLOUNDERING Chemphil Group run by man-about-town Antonio Garcia has decided to spin off even its headquarters on Pasay Road, an eight-story building sitting on a 1,009-square-meter lot, in a desperate effort to raise cash.

The buyer is said to be taipan John Gokongwei Jr., which will mark his first residential condominium foray into the Legaspi Village territory of the Ayalas.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

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PRULINK	**PRU LIFE U.K.**	
Investments of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week Jan. 10, 2006	Last Week Jan. 3, 2006
Bond Fund - Peso	1.37144	1.35305
Managed Fund - Peso	1.49901	1.47345
Growth Fund - Peso	1.16587	1.12927
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.2241	1.2162

* Note: Those investments of variable life insurance contracts are not mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission

2 groups offer to buy GSIS stake in EPCIB

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYStem president and general manager Winston Garcia said two groups of foreign investors, represented by a Manila-based lawyer, had offered to buy all the shares of the GSIS in Equitable-PCI Bank at P92 per share.

Garcia said he had received a letter from the lawyer, whom he declined to identify for the moment, yesterday afternoon.

"On behalf of our two (2) groups of clients, we hereby register their intention/interest to buy all the shares of stock of the GSIS in Equitable PCI Bank at the price of P92 per share, subject to adjustment depending on the result of the due diligence examination of the records of the bank and the terms and conditions that may be mutually agreed upon," the letter to Garcia stated.

"This letter of intent demonstrates the trust and confidence of our foreign clients in the economic stability of the country and faith in your banking system," the letter added.

The offer came after the group of retail tycoon Henry Sy offered to merge Banco de Oro and Equitable through a share swap, offering 1.6 shares of Banco de Oro for every share of Equitable. Analysts said the offer was equivalent to about P76 per share, discounting goodwill and the bank's bad assets.

Garcia branded the merger offer as "grossly and scandalously disadvantageous" to the GSIS and its shareholders.

The state pension fund holds almost 13 percent of the total shares of Equitable. The shares were acquired in 1999 at P92 per share. Garcia said the GSIS was willing to sell its stake only at the right price, which is at least P92 per share.

Traders . . .

From page B1

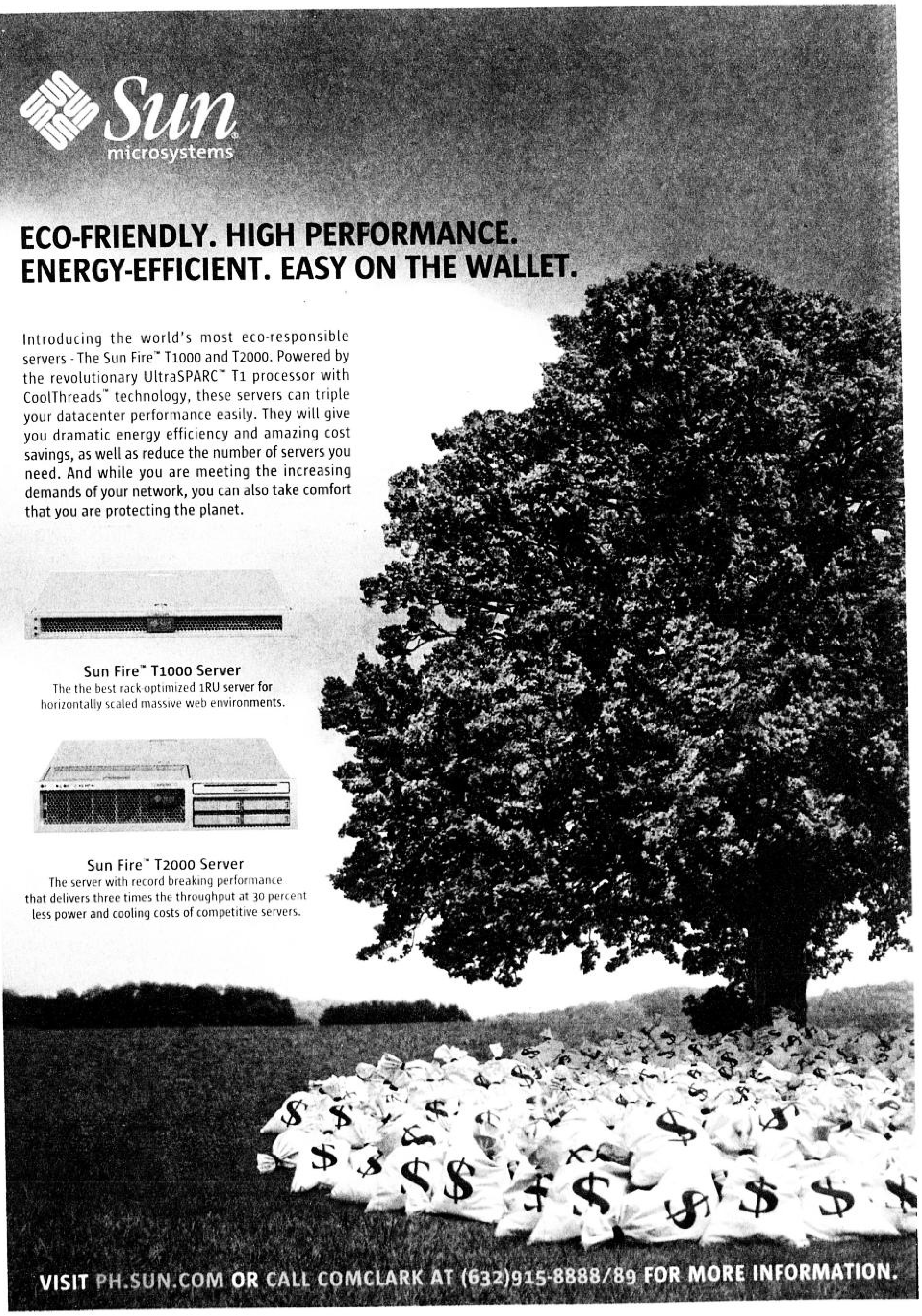
Some businessmen, including those in the automotive sector, said the 70-percent VAT cap should only be applied to industries that have huge profit margins. A 70-percent VAT cap was burdensome for capital- and labor-intensive businesses, they said.

But Beltran said the recent move of the DOF and the Bureau of Internal Revenue to limit the coverage of the 70-percent VAT cap would have addressed the complaints of the business sector.

When the DOF and the BIR came out the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the VAT Reform Law, Beltran said, the agencies already made a liberal interpretation of the VAT cap.

The IRR states that the 70-percent cap on input VAT credits would only apply to companies whose input VAT credits exceed their output VAT.

This means that companies whose input VAT credits reach an amount equivalent to 99 percent of their output VAT, then they could claim the input VAT credits in full. On the other hand, a company whose input VAT credits reach 101 percent of their output VAT, then it could claim credits equivalent to only 70 percent of its output VAT.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MMFF honors Henry Sy with lifetime achievement award

THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL EXECUTIVE Committee recently presented its lifetime achievement award to SM founder and chair Henry Sy during its awards night at the Aliw Theater.

In the citation signed by Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, Sy was cited for his "unwavering commitment to the promotion of Filipino Motion Pictures that has, through the years, served as a continued advancement of the Filipino Film Industry."

He was also cited for his "unrelenting efforts to draw back millions of our countrymen from all walks of life to watch Filipino films in refurbished cinemas."

During the same evening three SM Cinemas won the MMFF's top grosser award for one screen. The SM North Edsa cinema was Metro Manila's top grosser for "Enteng Kabisote" at P872,880, while the SM City Dasmarinas cinema was the Luzon top grosser also for "Enteng Kabisote" at P432,956. SM City Cebu's cinema was the top grosser for the Visayas with "Exodus" at P181,901.

SM Cinema has to date 152 screens nationwide, making it the largest cinema operator in the country. Its state-of-the-art cinemas have also been venues for prestigious film festivals, as well as red carpet premieres, and live performances.

In tandem with SM Supermalls' aggressive expansion program, there will be more cinemas opening in 2006. SM City Santa Rosa will have four cinemas. SM Clark will have six, and SM City Lipa will have four. SM's first Supermall, SM City North Edsa, will have additional four cinemas. The much awaited Mall of Asia will have 9 regular cinemas and an Imax cinema when it opens in February.

SM FOUNDER and chair Henry Sy was awarded the lifetime achievement award by the Metro Manila Film Festival for his great contributions to the Philippine movie industry through SM Cinemas.

SM CITY North Edsa theater manager Ed Gaudier receives the top grosser award for SM Cinema North Edsa for the movie 'Enteng Kabisote'.

SM'S FVP for leisure engineer Ric Camaligan receives the lifetime achievement award for Henry Sy, from TV and movie personalities Boots Anson Roa and Eddie Gutierrez.

Message for UP CMC alumni: 'May INC ka pa!'

IF YOU ARE A GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERsity of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP CMC), please note that you still have an INC. You have to go to the CMC Plaridel Hall, Ylanan Street in UP Diliman, Quezon City on Jan. 14, 3 p.m. for completion.

Remember Aling Suming, the recently retired, longest-staying administrative staff who has been with the college since its early years? She is now asking you to help CMC-your home for four (or more) years - as it moves forward to its 40th year of producing the best and the brightest media practitioners. For her, your return to CMC on Jan. 14 is the way for you to complete the college's "deficiency."

Dubbed "Tawag ka ni Aling Suming," UP CMC will have a get-together on that day to elect the new officers of the UP CMC Alumni Association (UP CMCAA) and to launch the two-year fund-raising campaign for the college.

5,546 degree holders

Established as an institute on June 19, 1965 and elevated to college status on April 28, 1988, the college has produced 5,546 BA degree holders, 329 MA degree holders and 49 PhD degree holders.

Through the help of its alumni, the CMC hopes to build and equip the new CMC Media Center, provide grants for its faculty members and ensure the continuation of CMC's research and extension programs and projects, particularly the biannual refereed Plaridel (A Journal of Philippine Communication, Media, and Society) and the annual UP Gawad Plaridel for outstanding media practitioners.

Since DZUP will have a live coverage of the Jan. 14 affair, attending CMC alumni will be interviewed on the air. CMC graduates who are in the field of journalism and entertainment are also expected to provide special numbers.

Those who will attend will partake of the UP students' favorite snacks like fish balls, squid balls, *kwek-kwek*, *banana-cue* and *sago't gulaman*.

The entrance fee for the Jan. 14 get-together is P500, which entitles the holder to merienda and a raffle ticket. For inquiries, call Gina or Ilene at 920-6864.

National Power Corporation

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines

NPC-MMSD 2006-001

Fuel Hauling Services – Luzon Area/ Various Spare Parts and Lube Oils for NPC-SPUG

1. The NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION (NPC), through its approved Corporate Budget of CY 2005 intends to apply the sum of (Please see schedule under Item no. 9) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract listed below. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. NPC now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for GOODS listed below. Delivery of the GOODS is required by the date indicated in the bid documents. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from NPC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the Address given below from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM from Monday to Friday. Issuance of Bidding Documents shall start on January 6, 2006 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Monday to Friday. No Bid Documents shall be issued on the date of bidding.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount listed below. The method of payment will be cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. NPC will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on dates listed below at the designated NPC function rooms.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address as listed in the Bid Documents on or before the dates stated below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form as stated in the Bid Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on the dates specified hereunder at the designated NPC function rooms. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
9. ITEMS FOR BID.

Schedule	Date/Time & Place of Bidding	Item Description	PR No./ Inquiry No.	ABC (In Pesos)	Bid Docs Price
I	January 31, 2006 10:00 A.M. Morones Room	Hauling Services: for SPUG-Luzon Operations – Tablas DPP / Romblon DPP / PB109 / PB114	PB060131- MMMT4131 HO-LOD-05-213	10,286,550.00	P 3,300.00
II		Hauling Services: Masbate Pier to Sibuyan, Concepcion, Banton, Corcuera, San Jose & Ticao DPP	PB060104- MMMT3994(PB2) HO-LOD-05-190	4,965,080.00	P 1,100.00
III		Hauling Services: Manila Pier to Lubang DPP	PB060104- MMMT3995(PB2) HO-LOD-05-191	2,813,500.00	P 1,100.00
IV	January 31, 2006 2:00 P.M. Morones Room	Air Compressor for Power Barge 119	SB051103- MMJP3768(LSB 2/NP/PB) HO-B19-05-085	790,000.00	P 550.00
V		High Pressure Hose, Jack Cylinder Cap, etc. for Power Barge 108	PB051004- MMAM3515(PB2) HO-PB8-05-045	945,608.00	P 550.00
VI		Spare Parts of 6DK32 Daihatsu Engines of Power Barge 108	PB050906- MMAM3350(PB2) HO-PB8-05-025	2,780,000.00	P 1,100.00
VII	February 3, 2006 10:00 A.M. Kañao Room	Spare Parts of 5x260 Kw Perkins Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6) of Cuyo DPP	PB060203- MMVB4138 SL-CUY-05-014	3,261,700.00	P 1,100.00
VIII		Spare Parts of 1 x 448 Kw CKD for Cuyo Diesel Plant	PB060203- MMVB4139 SL-CUY-05-025	2,565,200.00	P 1,100.00
IX	February 3, 2006 2:00 P.M. Kañao Room	Spare Parts of Dale-Perkins Balabac Diesel Power Plant	PB060203- MMVB4140 SL-BCD-05-016	1,056,000.00	P 550.00
X		Spare Parts of 2 x 54.4 Kw Onis Visa Gensets of Linapacan DPP	PB060203- MMVB4141 SL-LIN-05-006	585,000.00	P 550.00
XI		Spare Parts of Unit No. 1 (54 Kw Onis Visa Genset) for Agutaya Diesel Plant	PB060203- MMVB4142 SL-ADP-05-011	475,000.00	P 550.00
XII	February 3, 2006 2:00 PM Kañao Room	Lube Oil Requirement of Palawan Area Plants for CY 2006	HO-PWN-05-030	5,456,010.00	P 2,200.00
XIII		One (1) Year Supply of Lube Oil of Catanduanes/Masbate/Albay Operations Division for CY 2006	CMAOD-05-080	20,043,240.76	P 5,500.00
XIV		Lube Oil Requirement of MQNL Plants for CY 2006	NL-MON-05-45	5,076,000.00	P 2,200.00
XV		Lube Oils for Power Barge 120	HO-B20-05-098	3,192,000.00	P 1,100.00

NOTE: A Pre-bidding Conference will be held for the following bidding schedules:

Schedule	Date	Time	Place
Schedule I – VI	January 17, 2006	2:00 P.M.	Kañao Room
Schedule VII – XV	January 20, 2006	2:00 P.M.	Pahiyas Room

10. NPC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
THE BAC, MMSD – SECRETARIAT
Materials Management Department
Materials Management Services Division
Agham Rd. cor. Quezon Avenue
Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. 921-6048, 921-3541 Loc. 5599 & 5477
mlmñanes@napocor.gov.ph
Fax No. 921-6048 • http://www.napocor.gov.ph

(Sgd.) LORENZO S. MARCELO
Chairman, BAC-MMSD

(PDI - January 6 & 13, 2006)

PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY

PORT DISTRICT OFFICE OF VISAYAS
CIP COMPLEX, SERGING OSMEÑA BLVD., NORTH RECLAMATION AREA, CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES
TEL. NO (032) 232-3401 TO 04, FAX NO (032) 232-1990
email: pdavisayas@ppavis.com website: www.ppavis.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY, Port District Office - Visayas,** through its Bids and Awards Committee - Engineering Project (BAC-EP), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

A:

Name of Contract	: **Improvement of Guimbal Port**
Location	: Guimbal, Iloilo
Brief Description	: Construction RC Deck
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	: P16,773,366.85
Source of Funds	: PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration	: Two Hundred Thirty Five (235) Calendar Days
PCAB Registration	: **MEDIUM A** "Ports, Harbor & Offshore Engineering"

Required Equipments :

1)	2 units	: Bar Bender	- Owned
2)	2 units	: Bar Cutter	- Owned
3)	2 units	: One Bagger Concrete Mixer	- Owned
4)	2 units	: Concrete Vibrator	- Owned
5)	1 unit	: Boom Truck	- Owned
6)	1 unit	: Diesel Hammer	- Owned/Leased
7)	1 unit	: Drop Hammer	- Owned/Leased
8)	1 unit	: Truckmounted Crane	- Owned/Leased
9)	1 unit	: Welding Machine	- Owned

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/ Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	January 20-26, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Jan. 20 - Feb. 2, 2006
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	February 9, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas, CIP Complex, Serging Osmeña Blvd., North Reclamation Area, Cebu City upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of **P1,100.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P11,000.00** (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas Cashier.

The Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office - Visayas assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

This publication voids the last publication of the Invitation for Eligibility and to Bid for the above project which had an estimated cost of P9,399,541.64 published on Dec. 29, 2005.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **JAMES J. GANTALAO**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Jan 6 & 13, 2006)

ATF '06 kicks off

SOME 3,000 DELEGATES from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the rest of the world kick off the 9-day Asean Tourism Forum in Davao City today.

The delegates include officials of Asean governments, Asean exhibitors of tourism products and destinations, foreign buyers of travel packages, international media, and officers and members of national tourism organizations (NTOs), Asean Airlines Association (AAA), Asean Hotel & Restaurant Association (Ahra), Federation of Asean Travel Association (Fata), and various other sectors of the global tourism industry.

The event starts this morning with a meeting of the Asean Special Working Group on tourism integration. This will be capped by a dinner at the Waterfront Insular Hotel hosted by Region XI executives of national agencies for the Asean Tourism Task Force delegates.

Tomorrow will be a daylong meeting of the Asean NTOs at the Pearl Farm Beach Resort, with dinner hosted by the Garden City of Samal. The meeting will continue up to Sunday noon, followed by a city tour from 12:30 to 5 p.m. At the same time, a meeting of the NTOs of Asean, China, Japan and Korea (NTOs + 3) will be held in the same venue from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., followed by a meeting of Asean and India NTOs from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and a dinner hosted by the provincial government of Davao del Norte from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

On Jan. 16, the Aseanta, Ahra, and Fata will have their respective annual board and general meetings at the Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao.

From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. of the same day will be the staging of the ATF's 5-day tourism expo dubbed Travel Exchange (Travex) at Level 3 of the NCCC Exhibition Centre, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. the meeting of the Asean Tourism Ministers, and from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. a dinner hosted by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte for the ministers and NTOs and Aseanta delegates.

On Tuesday, there will be "Fun in Paradise" games at the Paradise Island Resort and a TTG Asia-sponsored golf game at the Apo Golf & Country Club from 7:30 a.m. to 12 noon. There will also be a meeting of the Asean Tourism Ministers + 3 at the Pearl Farm Beach Resort from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, lunch hosted by CNN from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., and a meeting of Asean and India Tourism Ministers from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

The press conference of the Asean Tourism Ministers + 3 will be held at the Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. of the same day, while the formal opening ceremony of the ATF 2006 will be staged at the Central Bank from 7:30 to 10 p.m.

Scheduled for Jan. 18 are the countryside tours from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Asean Tourism Conference (ATC) at the Apo View Hotel Grand Ballroom from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, lunch hosted by Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) at the Buffet Palace Restaurant for hosted foreign media and buyers from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Travex briefing at the NCCC Exhibition Centre Cinema 1 from 2 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., CNN-sponsored golf game at Palos Verdes for tourism ministers from 2 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., media briefing by Asean NTOs at the NCCC Exhibition Centre Cinema 1 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., on-site appointment sessions between sellers and buyers at the NCCC Exhibition Centre Ground Level from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. and at the Level 4 from 4:15 to 5:15 p.m. A cabaret and casino night will be hosted by Travel Weekly from 10 p.m. to 12 midnight at the Casino Filipino Grand Regal Hotel.

For Jan. 19 are island-hopping tours from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Travex Appointment Session I at NCCC Exhibition Centre Level 4 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, Asean NTOs' media briefing at the NCCC Exhibition Centre Cinema 1 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., lunch hosted by the Socsargen local governments from 12 noon to 2 p.m., Travex Appointment Session II at the NCCC Exhibition Centre Level 4 from 2:15 to 6 p.m., dinner hosted by the Singapore Tourism Board at the Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and "Dance Fever" co-hosted by The Marco Polo Hotel Davao and TTG Asia at the Marco Polo Hotel Davao Ballroom from 10 p.m. to 12 midnight.

Scheduled on Jan. 20 are Asean NTOs' media briefing and Travex appointment sessions at the NCCC Exhibition Centre, lunch hosted by the local government of Mati, Davao Oriental, and the closing ceremony at The Venue.

The post-ATF tours for foreign buyers and media begin on Jan. 21.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 12, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	15,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	36	35.5	36	118,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56	56	55.5	56	714,900
China Banking Corp.	605	610	605	610	3,790
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	62.5	63	62.5	63	1,315,200
International Exch. Bank	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	80,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33.5	33.5	33	33.5	576,500
Philippine National Bank	32	32.5	32	32	155,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	35.5	35.5	35	35.5	171,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	31.5	31	31	13,200
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	10,200
Manulife Financial Corp.	3170	3170	3170	3170	1,400
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2120	2130	2120	2130	220
Ivantage Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	810,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	52.5	52.5	52	52.5	697,500
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	1,600
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22	21.5	22	595,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.5	6,523,000
Petron Corp.	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.9	3,001,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	220,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	300,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	30,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23	23	23	10,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	39.5	39.5	39.5	39.5	180,100
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	3,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	64,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	64	64.5	38,600
San Miguel Corp. B	88	88	88	88	165,600
Universal Robina Corp.	20	20	18.5	18.5	95,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	300,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	550,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.77	1,720,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	50,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	2,045,000
CHEMICALS					
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,000,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	153,000,000
Atok-Big Wedge. Inc. B	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,000
Ayala Corp.	340	342.5	337.5	340	218,870
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.9	4.85	4.85	85,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.023	4,300,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.14	2.16	2.14	2.16	1,958,000
APC Group Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	860,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	47,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	10,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	40,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	5,020,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.35	3.35	1,412,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.22	1.22	24,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.7	3.75	581,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.215	0.245	0.21	0.235	10,980,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	40,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	80,000
SM Investments Corp.	241	241	239	240	472,710
South China Resources Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	50,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	500,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.5	10.5	10	10.25	11,947,600
Belle Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.02	1.04	2,157,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	300,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	137,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.94	1.94	164,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	1,470,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	230,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	8,950,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	1,300,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.52	1.54	1.5	1.54	7,641,000
Interport Res. B	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	1,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	700,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	400,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.38	1.4	1.36	1.38	7,815,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.36	0.37	0.35	0.35	13,450,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8	13,290,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.125	0.125	970,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	42,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.93	0.94	0.92	0.94	1,390,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	770	770	760	770	57,390
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.55	3.6	3.55	3.55	3,139,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1845	1855	1840	1855	167,950
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,000,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	16,900,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	1,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	97,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	10	10	9.9	9.9	255,500
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.26	1.26	51,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	137,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	100,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	360,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	9	9	5,000
Ipeople Inc.	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.1	35,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	42,000
Paxys Inc.	6.2	6.6	6.2	6.6	3,021,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.1	1.18	1.1	1.18	3,899,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.18	1.32	1.16	1.3	3,586,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	9,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8	208,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	20,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.58	1.62	1.58	1.62	255,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.235	36,770,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.28	0.29	0.27	0.29	56,490,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	62,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.028	0.029	58,800,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	30,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.44	1.48	1.4	1.48	5,674,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2	2.1	1.96	2.1	13,619,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27	27	26.5	26.5	555,600
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	780,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	40,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated, Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	120,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	1,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.35	220,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series K	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series L	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,000
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	13	13	12.75	12.75	303,800

CURRENCIES

January 12, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.824538	1.000000	52.6500
Japan	Yen	0.007226	0.008764	0.4614
United Kingdom	Pound	1.455063	1.764700	92.9115
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106375	0.129012	6.7925
Switzerland	Franc	0.646494	0.784068	41.2812
Canada	Dollar	0.711914	0.863409	45.4585
Singapore	Dollar	0.506411	0.614175	32.3363
Australia	Dollar	0.622434	0.754888	39.7449
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.187685	2.653224	139.6922
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.219865	0.266652	14.0392
Brunei	Dollar	0.504861	0.612295	32.2373
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000087	0.000106	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.020769	0.025189	1.3262
UAE	Dirham	0.224492	0.272264	14.3347
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.212800	63.8539
Argentina	Peso	0.270341	0.327869	17.2623
Brazil	Real	0.362594	0.439754	23.1530
Denmark	Kroner	0.134076	0.162607	8.5613
India	Rupee	0.018786	0.022784	1.1996
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220082	0.266916	14.0531
Mexico	New Peso	0.077864	0.094433	4.9719
New Zealand	Dollar	0.574031	0.696185	36.6541
South Africa	Rand	0.136373	0.165393	8.7079
Korea	Won	0.000838	0.001016	0.0535
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025745	0.031223	1.6439

SMIC putting up convention center, BPO facility worth P2.4B

Projects seen to start commercial operations in 2007

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS CORP., THE flagship company of retail tycoon Henry Sy, is spending P2.4 billion for a convention center and a call center facility on its 60-hectare business park near the Mall of Asia in Manila, the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Within the first quarter, SMIC said it would put up the country's first private exhibition and convention center, and a 10-story courtyard-oriented eCommerce building.

The planned 40,000-square meter SM Exhibition and Convention Center, which was estimated to cost P900 million, is envisioned to become a favored venue for major conferences, trade exhibits, and other international and local events.

The two-story convention center will have a total leasable area of 17,800 square meters featuring large exhibition areas and function rooms.

The 94,000-square meter SM eCOMCenter will have a total leasable area of 67,900 square meters with seven floors earmarked for office space, two and a half floors for parking, and the ground floor for commercial purposes. The project is expected to cost P1.5 billion.

the SM eCOMCenter will provide offices and workspaces with state-of-the-art facilities necessary for e-commerce businesses engaged in business process outsourcing and call centers. Both projects are expected to be completed by the middle of 2007.

SM Corporate Headquarters is home to US-based Teletech and the soon-to-open Mall of Asia will house the call center of Dell Inc. Apart from these two projects, other developments are being planned for the SM Central Business Park. These include the establishment of corporate headquarters for one or two conglomerates, hotels, office and residential clusters, a coliseum for sporting events and entertainment shows, as well as a ferry terminal.

The Mall of Asia, the property's centerpiece, is set to open by the first quarter of 2006.

Over the long term, the SM Central Business Park is expected to emerge as the foremost and only central business district (CBD) in the country by the bay, integrating business park facilities with entertainment, recreational, tourism, and residential land uses.

SC denies Mondragon bid to get Mimosa back

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—THE Supreme Court junked the bid of Mondragon Leisure and Resorts Corp. to regain the 210-hectare Mimoma Leisure Estate here from state-owned Clark Development Corp.

This was contained in a court resolution dated Nov. 23, 2005 which was received by CDC only on Jan. 6.

MLRC, chaired by former Tourism Secretary Jose Antonio Gonzalez, elevated the case to the Supreme Court after the Court of Appeals on Aug. 16 last year dismissed the company's petition to set aside the Dec. 1, 1999 ruling of the Angeles City regional trial court (RTC) which allowed CDC to take over the property and proceed with its privatization.

The SC's third division, then chaired by now Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, said it had denied the motion because of the "failure of MLRC to show that a reversible error had been committed by the (appellate court)."

Judge Bernadita Erum of the Angeles City RTC had said in her order that MLRC failed to comply with the compromise agreement with CDC following its takeover of the facility in December 1998 due to unpaid leases worth P500 million,

The estate's facilities, formerly the rest and recreation center of the United States military, include five-star hotels and villas, 36-hole golf course, casino and restaurants.

The compromise agreement stated that "both parties have agreed that upon the failure of MLRC to pay any monthly rentals based on either the minimum guaranteed lease rentals or upon MLRC's failure to comply with any of the obligations under the compromise agreement ... CDC shall have the right to cancel and terminate the compromise agreement."

CDC president and chief executive officer Antonio Ng hailed the decision of the SC as "another victory for Clark." "This will allow the CDC to move on with the privatization of the estate," he said.

At least 10 companies have joined the first stage of the bidding process.

The privatization scheme requires the winning bidder to assume MLRC's debts of P1 billion, which is 50 percent of what Gonzalez's company owes to creditors, and P650 million to the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, CDC reports showed.

Key policy rates . . .

From page B1

Under the proposed measure, an individual also has the option to deduct the amount of his Pera savings from his or her taxable income.

The Pera bill, authored by Sen. Edgardo Angara, is supported by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. The central bank believes that the legislative measure would help mobilize savings, and thus address the country's poor savings rate.

Savings rate in the Philippines, which is below 30 percent of the gross domestic product, is considered weak compared with the level of savings in neighboring countries.

Supporters of the bill said that there is a need to increase savings which, in turn, are lent out to fund businesses or investments. The BSP this year wants the bill to be enacted. The proposal has been lingering in the legislature for quite some time.

The DOF, however, wants government to go slow on the Pera proposal. Congress already knows of the finance agency's stand on the Pera proposal, a DOF official said.

The DOF believes the Pera bill runs counter to government efforts to trim the number of fiscal incentives. Many such incentives might result in revenue losses.

The DOF believes that one weakness of the Pera bill is its doubtful ability to encourage the creation of new savings, the finance official said. He said individuals might only transfer existing savings accounts into Pera instead of opening new ones. *Michelle V. Remo*

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Fixed Income Fund	1.110858	1.099351
Balanced Fund	1.109162	1.085572
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CAB suspends Tiger permit

Singapore-Macau-Clark flights on until Jan. 20

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD has suspended the permit of Tiger Airways Pte. Ltd to mount its thrice-weekly Singapore-Macau-Clark flight.

The aviation board found Tiger Airways, the low-cost unit of Singapore Airlines and Ryan Air, guilty of three violations in relation to its temporary flight permit.

One is advertising and selling seats long before it got its permit.

Second is charging tariffs that had been not been approved by the board. Third is falsely claiming that its services have been cleared by the CAB.

"While the board is assessing the penalties for these violations, it had decided not to renew Tiger's provisional authority," said CAB executive director Tomas Mañalac in an interview.

"But the board decision will not prejudice Tiger's request for a permanent approval of its Macau stopover," he said.

The temporary permit expired on Dec. 31.

Mañalac, however, clarified that Tiger's Singapore-Clark flights were not affected as these had been permanently approved by the board.

Tiger Airways is one of two budget carriers that have made the former military airbase in Clark their hub. These carriers are selling tickets to Singapore for as low as $25 for those who would book months in advance.

The CAB, in the interest of public service, allowed Tiger Airways to continue flying to accommodate the tickets it had already sold, according to Mañalac.

The low-cost unit of Singapore Airlines told the CAB it needed 10 more days or up to Jan. 20 to carry the passengers who had bought the tickets.

"We don't want their passengers to be inconvenienced. If this happened elsewhere, Tiger would have to book its passengers in other flights," said the CAB chief.

The budget carrier started its Macau stopover flights last Oct. 30. The 30-day temporary permit was renewed on Nov. 30, then allowed to expire last year.

Tiger Airways flies 14 times a week from Singapore to Clark from only three flights weekly when it started touching down in Clark in April 2005, the same time that Malaysia's AirAsia started servicing the Kuala-Lumpur Clark and Kota Kinabalu-Clark routes.

evo
Asian Print Awards

THE PRINT Town Group received a bronze medal in the recently concluded Asian Print Awards, the only printer from the Philippines to be recognized in the prestigious annual competition. Showing off the award are (from left) Dennis Valdes, executive vice president of Print Town, Kevin Limjoco, C! Magazine publisher and Miguel Mari, C! magazine art director.

Cutting of PAL flights to KL, Saudi bucked

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINE AIRLINES' DECISION TO stop its less profitable flights to Riyadh and Kuala Lumpur will slow down the deployment of Filipino workers abroad, overseas workers said last Tuesday.

Eduardo Mahiya and Jackson Gan, presidents respectively of the Overseas Placement Association of the Philippines and the Pilipino Manpower Agencies Accredited to Taiwan, said PAL's decision should compel the government to reexamine its "open skies" policy, which they said had turned out to be generally disadvantageous to the country.

"Licensed recruitment agencies are already experiencing visa cancellations because we cannot book our workers for their flights to their job destinations. Now comes this PAL decision and [we] have a situation deteriorating already," Gan said.

Gan earlier called on the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to help Taiwan-bound overseas Filipino workers who continue to experience difficulty getting flights to the island.

Pilmat, a member of the Federated Association of the Manpower Exporters Inc., which Mahiya heads, also asked the POEA and the Department of Labor and Employment to sit down with the Civil Aeronautics Board to address the problem.

POEA Administator Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz earlier confirmed that about 37,000 OFWs were unable to leave last year, even if they had complete papers, partly due to booking problems.

However, DOLE undersecretary for employment Danilo Cruz allayed fears that the OFW deployment would suffer.

"We will do everything to solve the problem. I'm sure there will be other airlines that would seek additional flights to cover the routes that PAL would be leaving," he told reporters.

Mirant out of bankruptcy

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER ALMOST THREE YEARS, ATLANTA-based power firm Mirant Corp. has emerged from bankruptcy protection, paving the way for even stronger Philippine operations.

"With our corporate parent out of bankruptcy, we are better able to position Mirant as a stronger player in a vital industry in this country," Mirant Philippines Corp. president and chief executive James Harris said in a statement yesterday.

He did not elaborate on the company's future plans, however.

While the Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection filing did not affect Mirant Philippines, he said the process was "long and challenging for the entire Mirant organization."

On July 14, 2003 and on various other dates, Mirant's US and Canada units filed for bankruptcy protection.

The firm's other operations, including Mirant Philippines, however, did not do the same.

To emerge from bankruptcy protection, the company had to take the necessary steps to fulfill its Plan of Reorganization, including securing $2.35 billion in exit financing.

Under its Plan of Reorganization, Mirant is converting more than $6 billion worth of debts and liabilities into equity in the reorganized company.

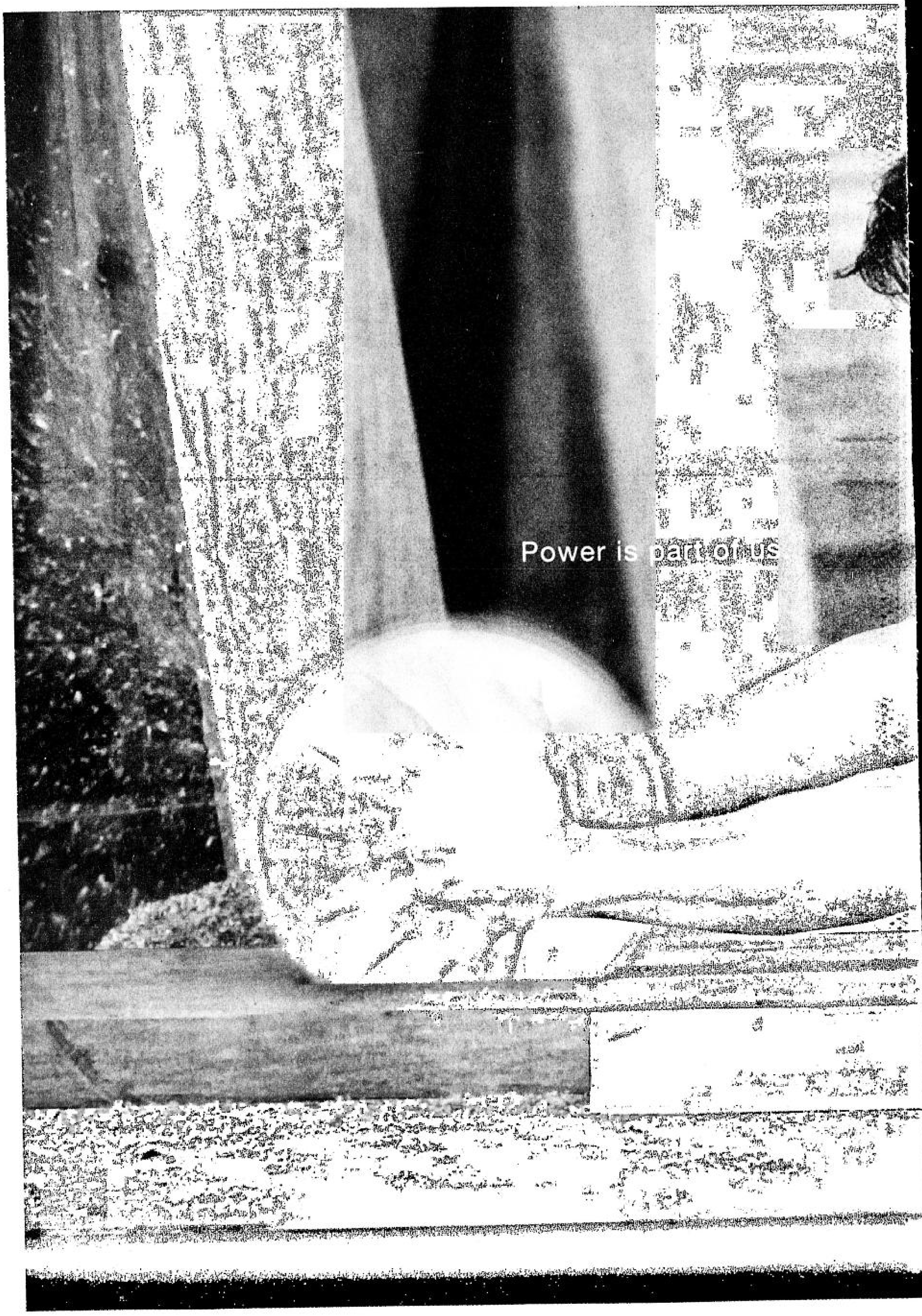
This will cut the company's overall debt by almost half.

These developments, Mirant Philippines said, paved the way for its "future success in the nation's electricity market."

Mirant Philippines is the country's largest independent power producer with more than 2,000 megawatts (MW) of installed generating capacity.

It operates the 1,200-MW Sual coal-fired power plant in Pangasinan as well as the 735-MW Pagbilao coal-fired facility in Quezon.

It also has a stake in the 1,200-MW Ilijan natural gas-fired power facility in Batangas.



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DBP raises ₱5B via subordinated notes offering

₱10-B capital infusion to be completed in H1

By Doris C. Dumlao

STATE-OWNED DEVELOPMENT BANK of the Philippines raised P5 billion from the first tranche of its offering of unsecured subordinated notes used as tier 2 capital.

In an interview yesterday, DBP consultant Jaime Panganiban said the bank could still complete the targeted P10-billion tier-2 offering within the next six months.

DBP's subordinated notes will mature in 10 years, subject to optional redemption by the issuer after five years.

The strategy of holding the other half of the offering at a later date, Panganiban said, could lower the bank's borrowing cost.

"There's a chance that interest rates would further go down," he said.

The issuance allows DBP to strengthen its capital base while providing investors with an attractive alternative to deposit products and other debt securities. The minimum denomination was set at P500,000 with increments of P100,000.

A P10-billion fresh capital infusion will raise the bank's capital adequacy ratio from 21 to 36-38 percent of risk assets and lessen its reliance on borrowings from multilateral institutions.

The unsecured subordinated tier 2 notes issuance was managed by Deutsche Bank, First Metro Investment Corp. and HSBC while Land Bank of the Philippines and Multinational Investment Bancorporation were also tapped as selling agents.

The issuance took advantage of an improving investor appetite and robust domestic liquidity.

The tier 2 offering will be followed by the issuance of another $100 million in hybrid tier 1 capital.

Hybrid tier 1 capital instruments have equity-like features making them acceptable as core capital. They may be in the form of unsecured subordinated debt or preferred shares with step-up feature.

These instruments are perpetual or without maturity, and are non-cumulative.

The capital build-up program is seen to prepare DBP for the implementation of international accounting standards and Basel 2 (risk-weighted capital adequacy rules). The bank's unimpaired capital now stood at P21 billion.

WTO, World Bank and poverty

By Ernesto M. Ordonez

COMMENTARY

IT IS SOMETIMES ALLEGED THAT THE World Bank uses its tremendous influence on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to impose rapid liberalization on unprepared developing nations, resulting in increased poverty.

This did not appear to be the case earlier this month. Barely two weeks after the WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong on Dec. 13-18, 2005, Thomas Herteland and Alan Winters released a World Bank research study entitled "Agricultural Trade Reform and the Doha Development Agenda."

In this study, Herteland and Winters said: "In contrast to many of the focus economies studied in this volume, the Doha reforms are not favorable to Philippine agriculture."

Research results

They cited the work done on the Philippines by Caesar Cororaton, John Cockburn and Erwin Corong. They said our country was "an interesting case because the agricultural sector has evolved from net exporter to net importer ... Because Philippine agriculture receives relatively high protection, full liberalization results in the contraction of the agricultural sector and an increase in rural poverty."

Maros Ivanic of the World Bank Group affirmed these findings. He evaluated the impact of three prospective trade reforms on poverty in 15 developing regions, including the Philippines.

Ivanic presented a table of changes in poverty under three scenarios which showed that full liberalization would increase poverty among Filipino agricultural households by 3.8 percent.

Dennis Estopace summarized the research results of the World Bank in this way: "Poverty will escalate in the rural areas and the number of poor rural families will increase with full liberalization under the Doha round of trade negotiations."

Past experiences

It is clear that developing countries need loans from institutions like the World Bank to hasten their development. These loans understandably have conditionalities. It is when these conditions are oppressive that the loans cause more, rather than less, poverty.

Like any institution, the World Bank has had its share of successes and failures. The recent publication of the aforementioned World Bank study shows that it is open to ideas that may contradict some of its previously held notions.

It is therefore recommended that instead of unfairly pigeon-holing World Bank as single mindedly pushing WTO toward rapid trade liberalization, we should engage the bank into a constructive dialogue. This way, its influence on WTO, as well as its loan conditions, will be more attuned to gradual selective trade liberalization.

International conference

At the November 2004 Asia Pacific Conference on Trade in Malaysia sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Third World Network and the North-South Institute, a developing country representative said that for his country, the World Bank was a greater obstacle than the WTO.

The WTO imposes bound (or maximum) tariff rates, while it is the government that implements applied rates that must be at or below the WTO bound rates. For example, in the Philippines, the average agricultural WTO bound rate is 35 percent, while the average applied rate was set by the government at 8 percent. This contrasts with Thailand, which has the same bound rate of 35 percent, but protects their farmers much better with an applied rate of 29 percent.

The representative said that when his government wanted to increase an applied rate to make it closer to the bound rate, the World Bank exerted loan conditionality pressure to prevent this from happening.

At this conference, we narrated that the Philippine World Bank representative behaved very differently. When the Alyansa Agrikultura lobbied to increase the tariff rate of carrots from the applied rate of 7 percent to its bound rate of 40 percent, it was the government that initially resisted, but finally agreed to 40 percent. The World Bank representative did not object to this move.

Many developing nation representatives at this conference were surprised. We implied that the unfortunate outcomes in their countries may not be the World Bank's fault. It might instead be their lack of initiative in explaining to their World Bank representatives the need for selective gradual liberalization, including increasing tariffs when prior mistakes on implementing too low tariffs have been made.

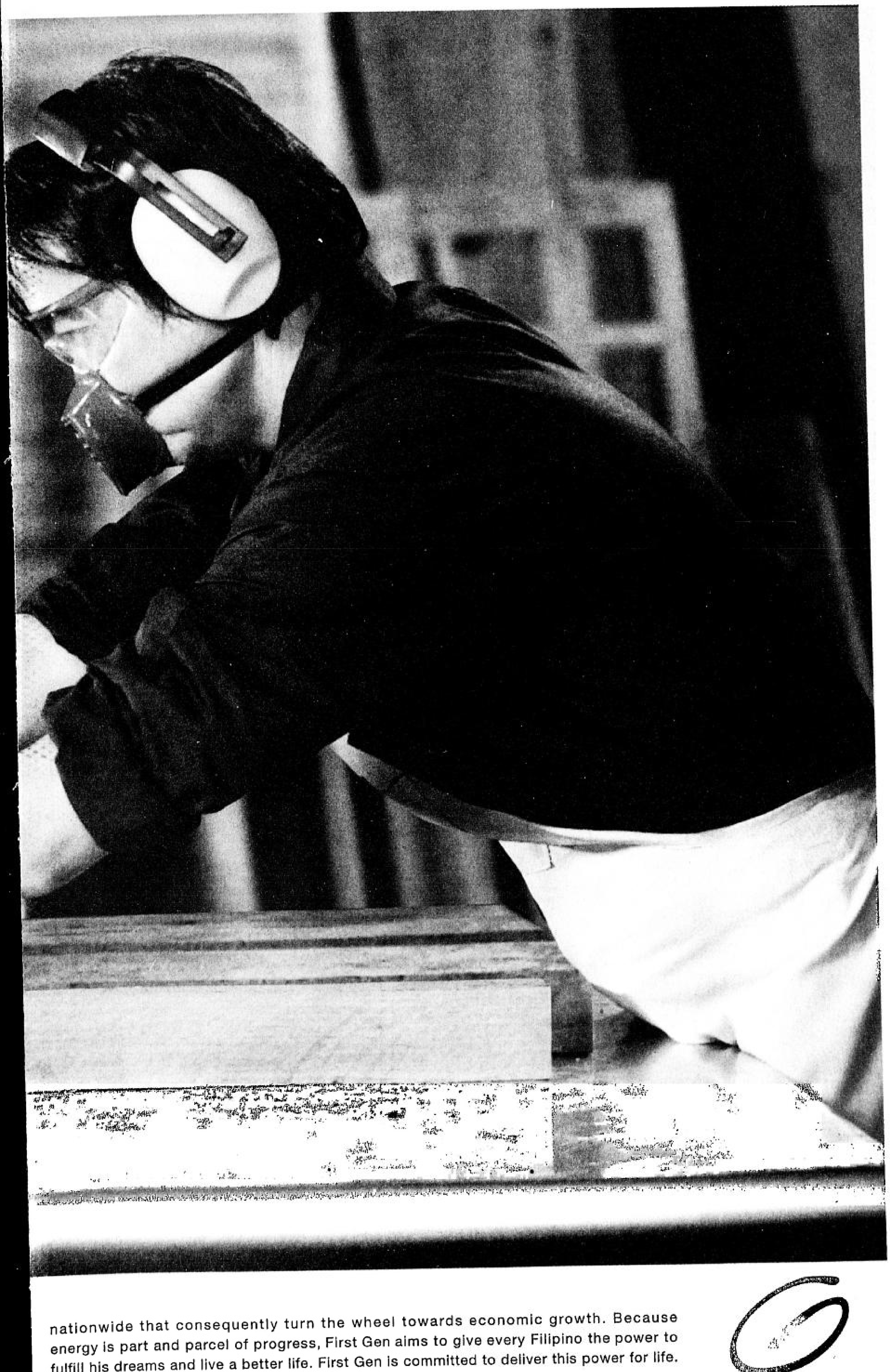
Next steps

There is no doubt that at the global level, the World Bank continues to wield great influence on the WTO. But as in the case just cited, the World Bank can be an ally rather than an enemy.

Two days ago, at a luncheon for WTO delegates he hosted, Trade Secretary Peter Favila committed to continue the pioneering initiative he started in Hong Kong of having significant private sector participation in WTO negotiations. Both Favila and Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban even agreed to recognize previously approved private sector representatives as official participants in the ongoing WTO negotiations in Geneva that will determine critical WTO provisions.

It is recommended that the private sector representatives undertake parallel talks with World Bank representatives in Geneva. If they are successful, both the World Bank and the WTO will be known as friends, rather than enemies, in our fight against poverty.

(The author is Agriwatch chair; former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agriwatchphil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8516635)



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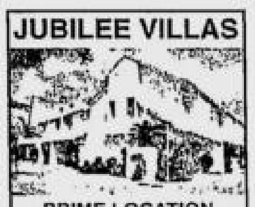

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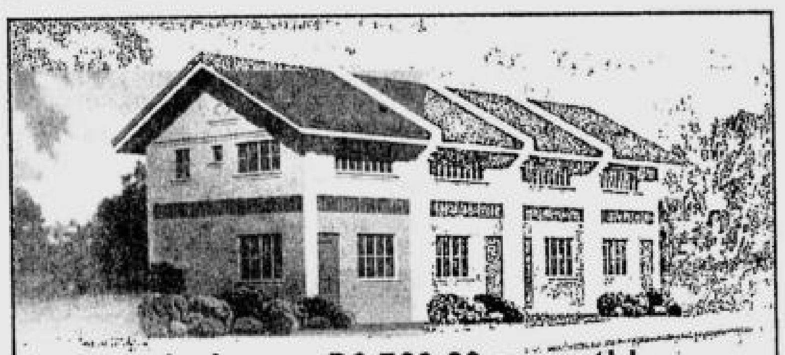

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CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

PEMBO SEMICONDO 2BR 1CR 0917-8860440

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QUEZON CITY

CUBAO U&D 2BR P8T 9121163

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•FURNISH PASAY 8872865•

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BINONDO AREA LEASE TO OWN AVLBLE 0917-8997547 JOY

MAKATI nr BUENDIA
38m^2 & 185m^2 8903461 ofc hrs

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Ofc/Condo/Hse 4 Rent/Sale 8925201;8921085;8921281

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE OR RENT

CONDO/TWNHSE/FOR SALE/RENT

SALE OR LEASE
Resort Condo 13K-25K/Mo 30 min S of Alabang 09184204333

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

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TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

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RUSH URBAN ESCAPADE 2004 FULLY LOADED P750T NEG CALL 09175053997

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CARS FOR RENT

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Cheap Van 9330311;9348411

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1% Easy Car Loan 4112547/48

1% w/out taking car 7262780

1% w/out taking car 5315577

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1.5% easy carloan 7815352/55

1.5% w/o taking Car 7228942-43

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We are in need of

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JOB DESCRIPTION:
✓ **Will handle a sub-distributor partner to grow the business.**

QUALIFICATIONS:
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☞ Preferably Male, willing to work on a graveyard shift, fast-paced, dynamic and flexible environment.

☐ Background in sales is not necessary, but a plus..

Send your ***Resume*** to **GQY Distribution Group Inc.** at
GQY Distributors Inc., Dolores Homesite Extension, Dolores, San Fernando Pampanga

or call/fax 045-9614048 and look for **Mr. Mar Manabat or Mr. Jess Yap.**
You can email it to
jessy@mail.irnet.net.ph or qdydistribution.com.ph

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

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PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

Marilao-Filipinas Pawnshop, M & R Bldg., Tabing-ilog Marilao, Bulacan. All Unredeemed Pledges of JULY 2005 will be Auctioned on Jan. 24, 08:00am. Lanuza & Sons Autioneer. (PDI-January. 13, 2006)

Meycauayan-Filipinas Pawnshop,Allw Complex, Calvario,Meyc.Bulacan.All Unredeemed Pledges of JULY 2005 will be Auctioned on JAN. 24, 10:00am. Lanuza & Sons Autioneer.(PDI-January 13, 2006)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late FELICIDAD TABERNERO who died on October 2, 1985 was extrajudicially settled in accordance with the extrajudicial settlement with waiver of rights by the heirs duly executed before Notary Public Consul General Rolando Guzman of Winnipeg, Monitoba, Canada per doc WG-463 Series 536 O.R. No.888998; Consul Raul Hernandez, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada as per Doc 068; Page 116; Book 08; Series of 2005. (PDI-Jan. 6, 13 & 20, 2006)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late MA. TERESA C. SANTIAGO has been extrajudicially settled among her heirs before Notary Public DANILO B. BAÑARES as per Doc. No.51387, Page No.83, Book No.102 Series of 2006. (PDI-Jan. 13, 20 & 27, 2006)

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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Send resumé to rosario dnl@yahoo.com or at 2404 East Wing, Phil. Stock Exchange Bldg., Exchange Road, Ortigas, Pasig

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is given that at the meeting of the Board of Directors of **MZ LAUNDRY VENTURES, INC.** it was **RESOLVED** that the corporation be dissolved and its affairs wound up, and for that purpose a special meeting of the stockholders will be held on the 15th day of January 2006 at 1:00 p.m. at 41 Carreon Village, San Bartolome, Novaliches, Q.C., Philippines to take action on the resolution.

(PDI - Dec. 30, 2005, Jan. 6 & 13, 2005)

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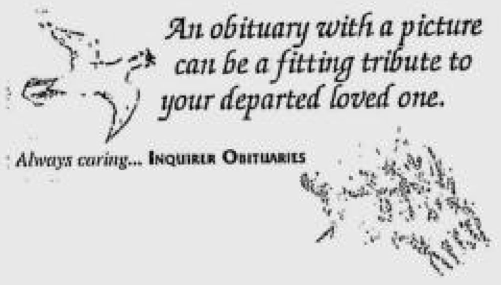

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate;
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS •
DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

RUFINO B. GAPUZ, JR.

Retiree of United Laboratories, Inc.

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 9, 2006 at the age of 57.

His body lies in state at Brgy. Santiago, Bauang, La Union.

Interment will be on January 15, 2006 at Santiago Cemetery after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at the Santiago Church.

FORTUNATA Q. ASUNCION

Peacefully joined her Creator on January 10, 2006 at the age of 97.

Her bereaved children **Fred** and **Sol**, **Lito** and **Nilda**; grandchildren **Marlene** and **Jojo**, **Janette** and **Robert**, **Ninah** and **Philip**, **Godo** and **Marites**, **Ferdie** and **Vicky**, **Edwin**, **Lenny**, **Anne** and **Cris**; great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Asuncion family residence in Batac, Ilocos Norte. Interment will be on Sunday, January 15, 2006.

CLASSIFIEDS

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION

Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF CONTAMINATED BUNKER-C AND WASTE OIL

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : January 18, 2006, 2:00 PM, Solarium Hall, Bldg.-1 Grd. Floor, NPC-HO, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the contaminated Bunker-C and located Power Barge 106, Keppel Shipyard, Bauan, Batangas.

SCHEDULE-I

Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1. Contaminated Bunker-C and waste oil approximately 460,000 liters located at PB-106, Keppel Shipyard Bauan, Batangas	P 8.00 / liter

Note : Interested parties who wish to secure bid form for the above items must be accredited/registered waste oil processors or treaters and must present valid DENR Permit to Operate

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S / CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OFFER.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2004) ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY OF THE BIDDER
3. VALID TAX CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE OF THE BIDDER
4. VALID PERMIT TO OPERATE AND TSD REGISTRATION

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P550.00/set from Mr. SAMUEL V. LOMUNTAD, Acting Manager, Warehousing, Inventory, Traffic and Asset Disposal Division (WITADD) at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no. 922-8431. Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM January 17, 2006.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) **ATTY. CATHERINE J. PABLO**
Officer-In-Charge
Materials Management Department

(PDI – January 13, 14 & 15, 2006)

Elysium Gardens Columbarium Now Ready for use.

ELYSIUM GARDENS COLUMBARIUM A MODERN /CLASSICAL columbarium which is conveniently located at 277 E. Rodriguez Avenue, Quezon City, within the Cathedral Heights compound bounded by Trinity College of Quezon City and St. Lukes Medical Center would like to announce that its construction is now **85% completed** and **is now ready for use.**

It offers indoor and outdoor garden vaults made out of Italian Marble and travertine stones, in a serene garden setting.

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
BOARD OF INVESTMENTS
Cagayan de Oro Extension Office

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that MALASAG RESORT CORPORATION is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as Expanding Operator of Tourist Accommodation Facility (Vacation Houses)/Non pioneer with a capacity of 30 rooms and with project/plant site located at Cugman, Cagayan de Oro City.

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) **RUDY B. CAÑA**
Director, PERD

(PDI - Jan. 13, 2006)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Quezon City

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

In consonance with Republic Act 9184, the National Food Authority (NFA) wishes to announce that it will be conducting an ocean freight bidding (OFB) on February 08, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BLDG., FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila among interested Vessel Owners/Operators to transport/ferry max. 400,000 MT (in bags of 50 kg) rice imports of China, Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan, Australia and/or US origin with an appropriated budget from NFA's corporate resources of FIVE HUNDRED THIRTY MILLION PESOS (Php 530 M). Details, as follows:

	COMMODITY/SPECS	QUANTITY (MT)	ARRIVAL PERIOD
A.	300,000 MT, Non-Iron Fortified Well-Milled, Long Grains White Rice 25% BKNS	AT LEAST 10% AT LEAST 50% BALANCE	FEBRUARY 2006 MARCH 2006 APRIL 2006
B.	50,000 MT, Non-Iron Fortified Well-Milled, Long Grains White Rice 15% BKNS	50,000	WITHIN APRIL 2006
C.	50,000 MT, Iron Fortified Well-Milled, Long Grains White Rice 25% BKNS	50,000	NLT MAY 2006

Philippine shipping companies shall be registered under Philippine Laws and accredited by Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

Foreign shipping companies must be represented by a local shipping operator/owner registered under Philippine Laws and accredited by Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

Minimum load is 3,000 MT and maximum load of vessel/s to be utilized shall be 15,000 MT. For USA, Australia and/or Pakistan origin, a maximum of 50,000 MT each origin will be awarded.

Minimum offer shall be 15,000 MT.

All interested offerors are required to submit bid offers in US Dollars per gross metric ton. Free in and Out stowed and Trimmed (FIOST), basis, one loading port, one (1) to two (2) safe berths and one discharging port, one (1) to two (2) safe berths, as specified in the NFA Ocean Freight Bid Terms.

Likewise, all interested offerors are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 2.5% of the highest value of the offered freight in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a reputable commercial bank.

Winning Bidders are required to submit a performance bond equivalent to 5% of the value of the awarded freight offer within three (3) banking days after receipt of the Notice of Award in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila.

List of Eligibility Requirements and Instruction to Bidders may be secured thru MR. TOMAS R. ESCAREZ, Assistant Department Manager and MR. NESTOR U. PUANGCO, Division Manager, Department for Marketing Operations, 5th Flr., NFA Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City, Telephone Nos. 712-1564, 743-86-96 or 712-3341 Loc. 8513 starting January 13, 2006.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) detailing the conditions of the bid and Offer Sheets will likewise be available starting January 13 up to January 31, 2006 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM) upon payment of a Php 7,500.00 non-refundable fee.

The **Ocean Freight Pre-Bidding** conference will be held on **January 25, 2006**, at **2:00 PM** at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila.

Submission of eligibility requirements, technical proposal and price offers will be between 8:00 AM to 9:55 AM at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila on **February 08, 2006. Opening of bids** will start at exactly **10:00 AM.**

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any required formality or defect therein and may accept the bid/s which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) **JESSUP P. NAVARRO**
Deputy Administrator
and Chairman, BAC

(PDI – January 13 & 20, 2006)

HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION

NOTICE OF SALE

Please be informed that the following properties of the Home Guaranty Corporation are being offered for sale:

PROPERTY LOCATION	TYPE	FLOOR AREA	LOT AREA	SELLING PRICE
CAVITE				
1. B4 L15 ACM Sherwood, Anabu 2, Imus, Cavite	R H	30	47.5	270,600.00
2. B7 L58 P2 MaryCris Homes, Bucandala II, Imus, Cavite	R H	20	40	192,500.00
3. B11 L4 Regatta Classics Ph. II-B, Anabu 2, Imus, Cavite	R H	36	50	278,300.00
4. B3 L14 Regatta Classics Ph. III-B, Anabu 2, Imus, Cavite	T H	41	35	247,500.00
5. B-13 L-27 Alfonso Village, Alapan, Imus, Cavite	R H	24	38	199,980.00
6. B-10 L-39 Alfonso Village, Alapan, Imus, Cavite	R H	24	38	213,180.00
7. B-9 L-29 Alfonso Village, Alapan, Imus, Cavite	R H	24	38	274,780.00
8. B-4 L-26 Alfonso Village, Alapan, Imus, Cavite	R H	24	38	250,580.00
9. B7 L28 Alfonso Village, Alapan, Imus, Cavite	R H	24	38	267,080.00
10. B4 L6 Villa Elisa Homes, Anabu, Imus, Cavite	SA	33.6	66.5	363,440.00
LAGUNA				
1. B4 L7 Banaba Lane, Alfonso Homes 1, Brgy. Labas, Sta. Rosa	T H	36	71.4	376,200.00
2. B20 L4 Palusapis St., Alfonso Homes 1, Brgy. Labas, Sta. Rosa	T H	60	54	418,440.00
MAKATI				
1. Unit 309 Bldg. B Bonaventure Garden Homes, Osmeña St. Makati City	condo	31.75	-	1,009,800.00
2. No. 2132 P. Binay St., Brgy. Bangkal, Makati City	3 res. bldg.	-	220	6,639,600.00
	Bldg. 1	195		
	Bldg. 2	44		
	Bldg. 3	53		

(Sgd.) **RAFAEL P. DELOS SANTOS**
Officer-in-Charge, Vice President
Project Management & Acquired Assets
Disposition Group

(PDI - Jan 13, 2006)

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS - FORT WORTH DIVISION

In re) Chapter 11 Case
MIRANT CORPORATION, et al.,) Case No. 03-46590 (DML)11
Debtors.) Jointly Administered

PUBLICATION NOTICE OF JANUARY 3, 2006 EFFECTIVE DATE FOR THE DEBTORS' AMENDED AND RESTATED SECOND AMENDED JOINT CHAPTER 11 PLAN OF REORGANIZATION

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that you have received this Notice because, as of the Effective Date (defined below), you were a known creditor or equity holder of Mirant Corporation or one of its affiliated debtors.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that an order (the "Confirmation Order") [Docket No. 12569] confirming the Amended and Restated Second Amended Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Reorganization for Mirant Corporation and its Affiliated Debtors, dated December 9, 2005 (the "Plan," attached as Exhibit 1 to the Confirmation Order[1]), of Mirant Corporation and its affiliated debtors and debtors in possession in these chapter 11 cases (collectively, the "Debtors"[2]), was entered by the Clerk of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas (Fort Worth Division) on December 9, 2005. Unless otherwise defined in this Notice, capitalized terms used in this Notice shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Plan and the Confirmation Order, as applicable.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the "Effective Date" of the Plan is January 3, 2006. As of the Effective Date, the terms of the Plan (including the exhibits thereto, the Plan Documents and all documents and agreements executed pursuant to the Plan) and the Confirmation Order are binding upon New Mirant and its Affiliates, the Debtors (other than the Excluded Debtors), the holders of all Claims against and Equity Interests in the Debtors, whether or not impaired under the Plan, each Person acquiring property under the Plan, any other party in interest, any Person or Entity making an appearance in these Chapter 11 Cases and each of the foregoing's respective heirs, successors, assigns, trustees, executors, administrators, affiliates, officers, directors, managers, members, partners, agents, representatives, attorneys, beneficiaries or guardians. To the extent any provision of the Confirmation Order may be inconsistent with the terms of the Plan or any Plan Documents, the terms of the Confirmation Order are binding and conclusive.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if you are a creditor of the Debtors, other than a beneficial holder of Allowed Equity Interests or Public Debt Securities (the similar, but non-transferable, rights of which are addressed in the next succeeding paragraph),[3] you may have a right to receive future Plan Distributions. In order to facilitate any such future Plan Distributions, you are responsible for maintaining accurate address information on file with Bankruptcy Services, LLC, 757 Third Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017; Fax (646) 282-2501. **THE FAILURE TO MAINTAIN SUCH ADDRESS INFORMATION MAY RESULT IN A FORFEITURE OF ANY FUTURE PLAN DISTRIBUTIONS TO WHICH YOU WOULD OTHERWISE BE ENTITLED.**

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if you are a beneficial holder of Allowed Equity Interests or Public Debt Securities as of the Effective Date, you may also have a right to receive future Plan Distributions, which right is non-transferable. In order to facilitate any such future Plan Distributions, you are responsible for maintaining accurate address information with the transfer agent in respect of your Allowed Equity Interests or the bank or brokerage firm that holds your Allowed Equity Interests or Public Debt Securities on your behalf. **THE FAILURE TO MAINTAIN SUCH ADDRESS INFORMATION MAY RESULT IN A FORFEITURE OF ANY FUTURE PLAN DISTRIBUTIONS TO WHICH YOU WOULD OTHERWISE BE ENTITLED.**

UNLESS (1) YOU MUST CORRECT INACCURATE ADDRESS INFORMATION AS DESCRIBED IN THE PRECEDING TWO PARAGRAPHS OR (2) YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL PERSON EMPLOYED UNDER AN ORDER OF THE BANKRUPTCY COURT, YOU DO NOT NEED TO TAKE ANY ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THIS NOTICE.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that professionals[4] employed under an order of the Bankruptcy Court are required to file applications for approval of compensation. Employees, former employees, creditors and shareholders are not required to file a fee application. With respect to professionals employed under an order of the Bankruptcy Court, on or before February 17, 2006 (45 days after the Effective Date), all applications for final allowances of compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to sections 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 503(b), and 1103 of the Bankruptcy Code for professional services rendered through the Effective Date (each a "Final Fee Application") must be filed with the Bankruptcy Court, together with proof of service thereof, and served upon the parties identified as "Notice Parties" in the "Notice to All Known Creditors and Equity Holders of (1) Entry of Order Confirming Debtors' Amended and Restated Second Amended Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Reorganization, Dated December 9, 2005 and (2) Certain Deadlines Associated Therewith," that was served on December 15, 2005 and filed with the Bankruptcy Court on December 27, 2005 (the "Notice Parties"). **THE FAILURE TO TIMELY FILE AND SERVE SUCH FINAL FEE APPLICATION SHALL RESULT IN THE FEE CLAIM BEING FOREVER BARRED AND DISCHARGED.**

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that objections, if any, to any Final Fee Applications shall be filed with the Bankruptcy Court, together with proof of service thereof, and served upon the applicant and the Notice Parties, so as to be received no later than 4:00 p.m., prevailing Central Time, on the date that is five business days before the hearing on the Final Fee Applications.

WHITE & CASE LLP	HAYNES AND BOONE, LLP
Thomas E Lauria, Wachovia Financial Center, 200 South Biscayne Blvd., Miami, Florida 33131	Robin Phelan, 901 Main Street, Suite 3100, Dallas, Texas 75202

ATTORNEYS FOR THE DEBTORS AND DEBTORS-IN-POSSESSION

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[1] The Confirmation Order and the Plan are available for inspection in the office of the Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court at the United States Bankruptcy Court, Eldon B. Mahon United States Courthouse, 501 W. Tenth Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76102. The Confirmation Order and the Plan (a) are also available on the Debtors' website at www.mirant-caseinfo.com and on the website of Bankruptcy Services, LLC, at www.bsillc.com or (b) may be obtained upon written request to Mirant Corporation, c/o Bankruptcy Services, LLC, 757 Third Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10017; Fax (646) 282-2501.

[2] In accordance with Sections 15.3, 17.16 and 17.26 of the Plan, the Plan is deemed to exclude Mirant New York, Inc., Mirant Bowline, LLC, Mirant Lovett, LLC, Hudson Valley Gas Corporation and Mirant NY-Gen, LLC (the "Excluded Debtors") from the MAG Debtors and the Confirmation Hearing with respect to each Excluded Debtor is adjourned until further notice or order of the Bankruptcy Court.

[3] "Public Debt Securities" is defined to include MAG Short-term Notes, Mirant Notes, and the Subordinated Notes.

[4] Examples of such professionals include attorneys, accountants, financial advisors, etc

(PDI–January 13, 2006)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

06-1SG-004
Janitorial and Housekeeping Services for the Main and R.V. Mitra Building for CY 2006
House of Representatives, Quezon City

Standard Form Number: SF-GOOD-05
Revised on. July 28, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The House of Representatives, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers, manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	Janitorial and Housekeeping Services for the Main and R. V. Mitra Building for CY2006
Location	House of Representatives, Constitution Hills, Quezon City
Brief Description	*Provision of Janitorial and Housekeeping Services for various Congressmen's offices and various Secretariat offices located at the Main Building and R.V. Mitra Building*
Approved Budget for the Contract	P6,050,198.00
Delivery Period	*As specified in the contract*

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding, and have key personnel and equipment (owned, leased or under purchase) available for the prosecution of the project. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A.

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	Jan 6 - Jan 17, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	January 23, 2006
3. Submission of Eligibility Requirements; Technical and Financial Proposals/Opening of Eligibility, Technical and Financial Envelopes	February 9, 2006
4. Bid Evaluation	February 9, 2006
5. Post-qualification	February 16, 2006
6. Notice of Award	March 9, 2006

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **Three Thousand Pesos Only (P3,000.00)** to the House of Representatives Cashier before 3.00 P.M. (Monday to Thursday only).

The complete set of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Documents may be obtained at the (Bids and Awards Committee-Secretariat) Office of the Procurement and Supply Management Service, South Wing Extension, c/o Mr. Dominador M. Gamboa, BAC-Secretariat Head (Tel. Nos. 931-5683 & 931-5001 loc. 7523 & 7398). Eligibility documents, technical and financial proposals shall be placed in separate and marked sealed envelopes addressed to Atty. Leonardo B. Palicte III, Bids and Awards Committee Chairman, c/o the BAC-Secretariat and dropped in the bid box located at the Conference Room, Deputy Secretary General for Internal Audit, South Wing Basement, House of Representatives, National Government Center, Constitution Hills, Quezon City. **Deadline of submission and receipt of sealed bids shall be on Thursday, February 9, 2006 at 2:00 P.M.**

The House of Representatives assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) **ATTY. LEONARDO B. PALICTE III**
Bids and Awards Committee Chairman

(PDI – January 6 & 13, 2006)

IT deals to hit ₱20B–BOI

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INVESTMENTS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-enabled services are expected to reach P20 billion this year, an increase of at least 50 percent, as at least seven big firms have signified interest in putting up call centers and business process outsourcing operations here.

Celeste B. Ilagan, executive of the Board of Investments, in a press briefing declined to name the companies but said all seven were based in the United States.

Speaking during the launch of the 6th Outsourcing Conference and Exhibition, Ilagan said that in 2005, investments in the ITES sector reached a total of P12.11 billion spread over 70 projects registered with the government's incentive-granting agencies.

Of the 70 projects listed with the BOI, Philippine Economic Zone Authority, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and Clark Development Corp. last year, the biggest in terms of project cost was American firm Dell Inc.'s $3-million call center in Pasay City.

The Philippines will showcase its capabilities in the IT industry through the trade show, also called e-Services Philippines 2006, would be held from Feb. 16-17 in Mandaluyong City.

Organized by the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, ESP 2006 would showcase the country's expertise in medical transcription, animation, software development, BPO engineering design and contact center services.

In a related development, Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the HSBC group was looking at putting up a second call center in the country following the successful operations of its first site in Filinvest, Alabang.

Favila said HSBC was considering the northern part of Metro Manila as a location for the second call center, which would help expand the company's non-core activities and back-office functions here, specifically in finance and accounting.

Last July, HSBC launched its 2,000-seat, P1.5-billion call center in Alabang, which is the group's eighth site in Asia including those in India, China and Malaysia.

Globe asks NTC to stop PLDT, Smart promo

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE TELECOM INC. HAS ASKED THE National Telecommunications Commission to suspend the P10 a call pricing scheme that the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and its wireless units have vowed to offer "forever."

Globe claimed that the P10 a call price of PLDT to PLDT, PLDT to Smart and PLDT to Talk 'N Text calls, as well as the P10 for 10 minute calls from Smart to PLDT and Talk 'N Text to PLDT, were "predatory" even if PLDT had offered to include other carriers in the promo.

PLDT said in a Dec. 6 letter to Globe that it could include its fierce rival in the promo if it would agree to adjust the termination rate between Globe and PLDT.

Globe said PLDT's pricing structures were below the wholesale access rate.

"It is a wonder how one can practically offer a P1 per minute call," said Froilan Castelo, Globe's head of regulatory affairs.

The NTC had said it does not have problems with PLDT's plan if it would offer the same promo, with the same terms, to other carriers.

For P50 a month, PLDT may start offering the P10 per call pricing to calls not only within PLDT and its wireless network but also to Globe, Touch Mobile, Digitel, Sun Cellular and even members of the Philippine Association of Private Telephone Co. or Paptelco, the umbrella organization of small telcos in the provinces.

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- Large font size option

NOKIA 6020
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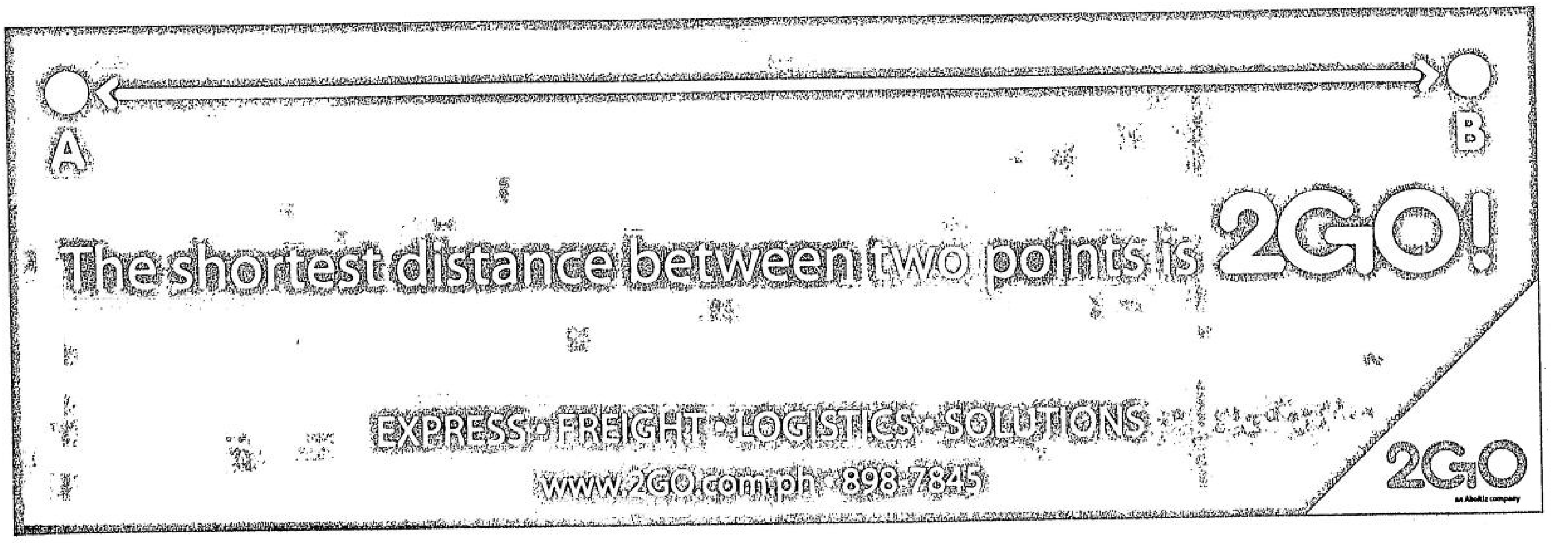
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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

BOOKS ◆ TUESDAY **FITNESS** ◆ WEDNESDAY **2BU** ◆ THURSDAY **FOOD** ◆ FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

CHRISTIAN Lacroix

Amid unhealthy times, people want to attain a healthy lifestyle psyche this year

LULU Tan Gan

INNO Sotto

KRIS Aquino

Manila braces for French designer Christian Lacroix retrospective

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

LAST WEEK **LULU TAN GAN** was all over the place making arrangements for **Christian Lacroix**'s visit to Manila in April. The French Embassy and Alliance Française are mounting a Lacroix retrospective here.

On top of that, Lulu is into a thousand-and-one other things: "I think I need 48 hours a day to achieve what I want. In the next half century of my life I'd like to be a student again, take up courses to learn about anything I fancy. I need mental stimulation, especially now that cities are going global and products becoming uniform."

Besides Lulu, I asked other friends and colleagues about their plans for '06 and at what point they think they are in their life. It's a good way to touch base and gauge the psyche health of people in this unhealthy times.

Kris Aquino will come out with her own glossy called K. She's been pretty hands-on in the editorial requirements, I can tell you.

Randy Ortiz trains his sights on the '07 opening of Greenbelt 5, which will house boutiques only of Filipino designers. He will finally have his lifestyle boutique there.

Jackie Aquino: "I want to lose 50 lbs, to do more big shows. Okay, 10 lbs, if 50's too much."

Marco Protacio: "I want to continue to be in love, stage the Cebu Fashion Week which will include Metrowear Cebu."

Francis Flores: "I've gone through enough experience [good and bad] to make me clearly see the things that really matter—God, family, true friends and love for yourself. In '06 I plan to channel my efforts nurturing these and ensure I don't lose focus."

Frannie Jacinto: "I'd like soul food—do more civic work that's dear to me. I'm in a good place, thankful to God for his many blessings."

Rhett Eala: "I lost 50 lbs in 2005. I want to lose another 20 lbs and firm up. I also want to be more spiritual and be less distracted by what's happening around me. What makes me happy is going to the gym and making clothes that make people happy."

Rajo Laurel: "To go global. We have plans to market our brand in HK, Shanghai, LA, San Francisco. It's time to confidently show the world the Filipino talent. I'm willing to take that risk."

Patis Tesoro: "To try to survive this economic crisis by being more creative, working harder, being more positive and charming."

Pinky Amador: "It's all about expanding my horizons, taking greater challenges, learning to appreciate and enjoy the one life we have to live…"

Dita Sandico-Ong: "I find the quiet moments on my own truly blissful. Moments of solitude really help me break through my day. I'll push projects like Earthlite for the weavers in Catanduanes and the Mangyans of Mindoro…"

Daphne Oseña Paez: "To finish renovating our antique house, to have a second baby. I'm at a point I'm realizing it's really hard to live in two worlds, here and Toronto. I should pick one already."

Tim Yap: "To fully embrace technology by putting up my website, also try to expand to Singapore, China. Go for 'masstige,' or mass prestige. If last year was laying the foundation, this year is nurturing and watching it grow. I'll have a new lifestyle reality show called "MTV Bling," I'll shoot a new campaign for Greyhound and design limited-edition products for an international brand."

Neil Rumbaoa: "To save up, invest in something substantial. I belatedly realized that living the present doesn't work in the real world…"

Toni Gregory: "To be in constant state of love. I love what I do and yet to do. Paint, write, inspire young people and be inspired by them…"

Pepper Teehankee: "Am *mababaw*! My major plan is to travel around the world. I have only hit 30 countries, Several more to go…"

Lorraine Belmonte: "Am really in a good place. My only daughter is away at college.

MANILA/ C4

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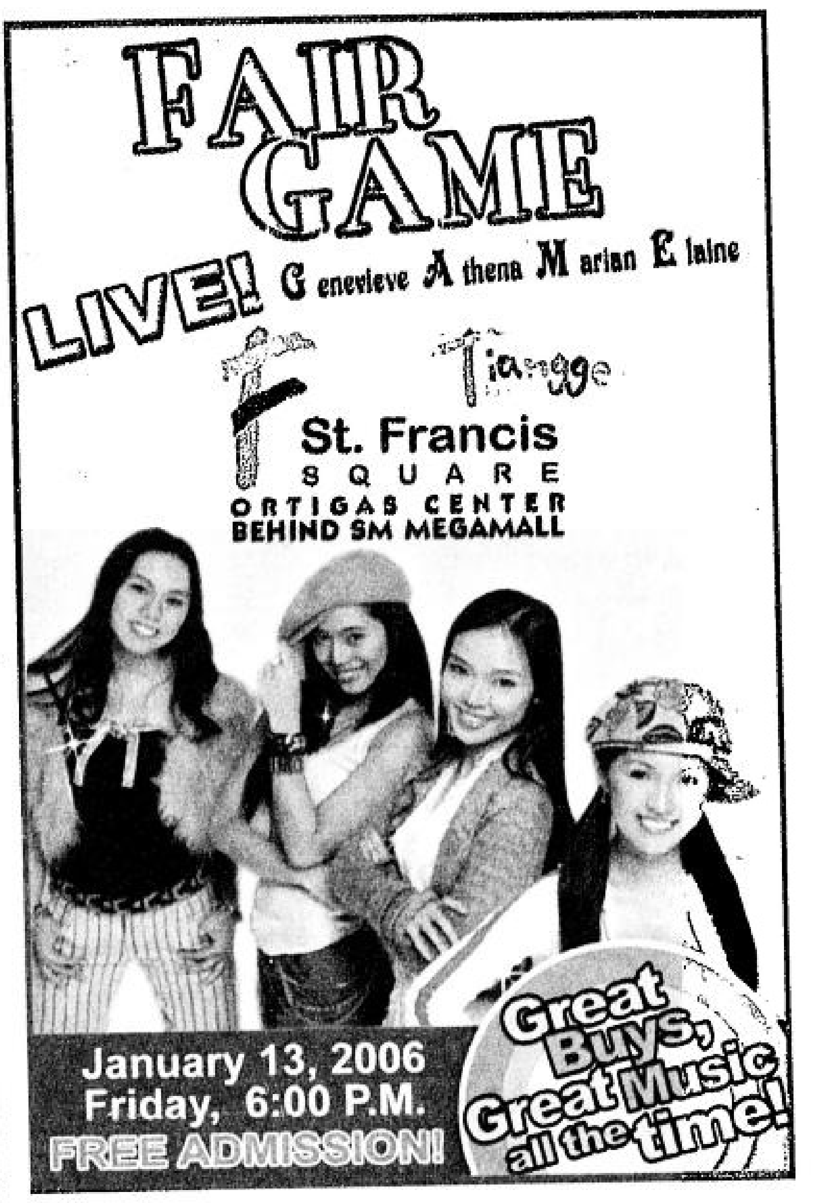

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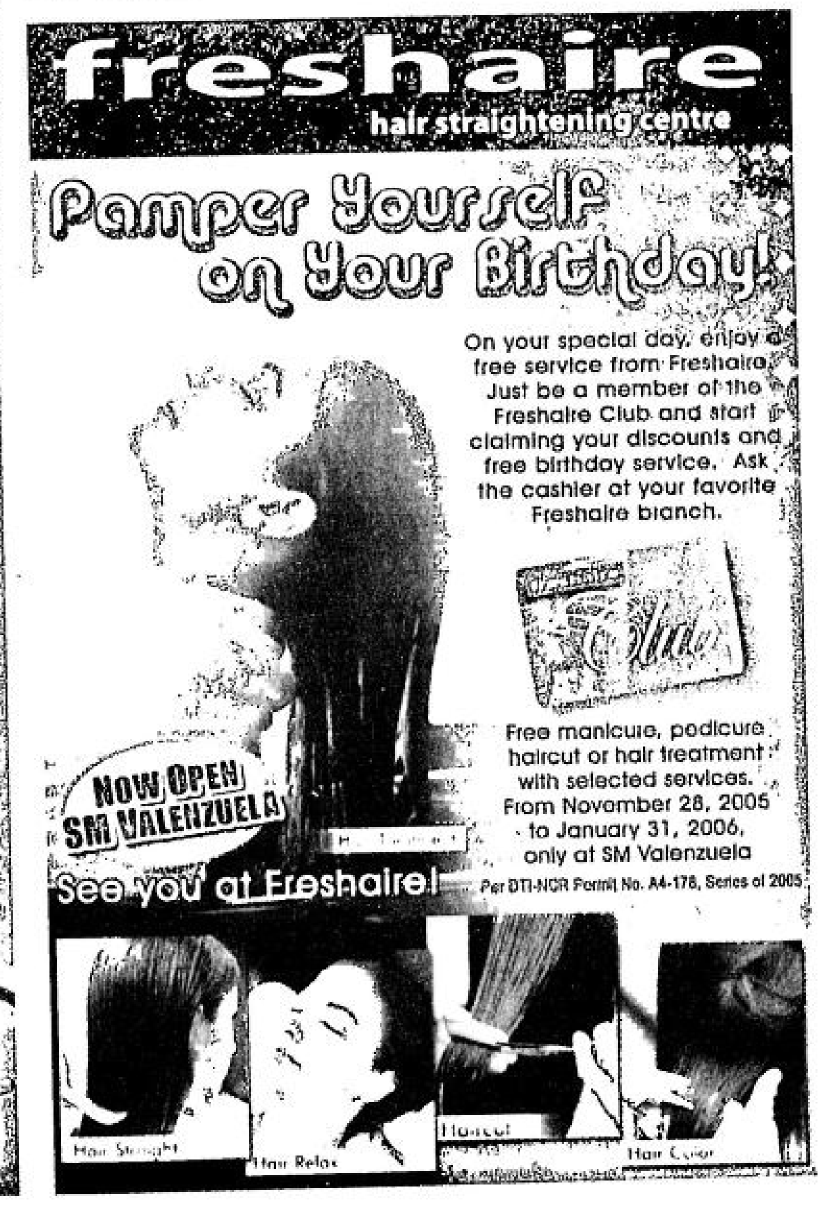

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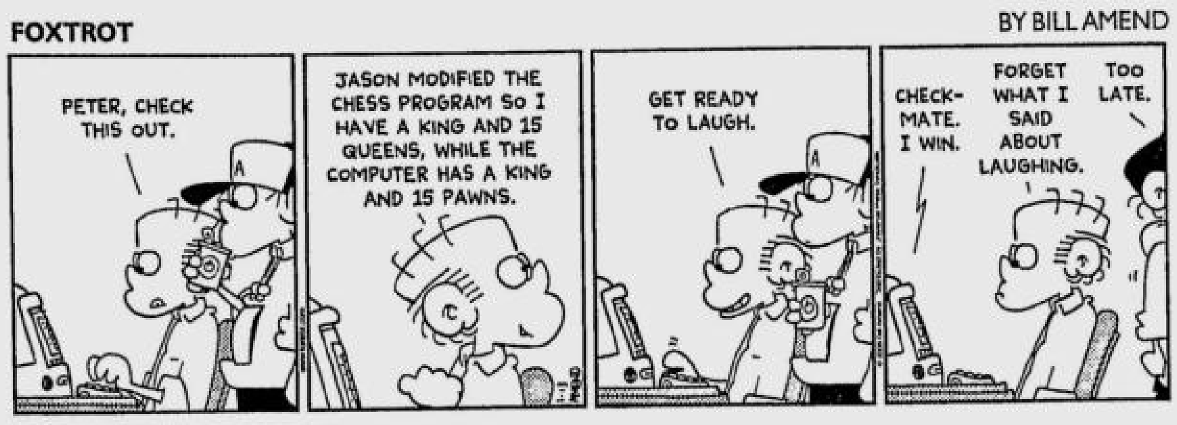
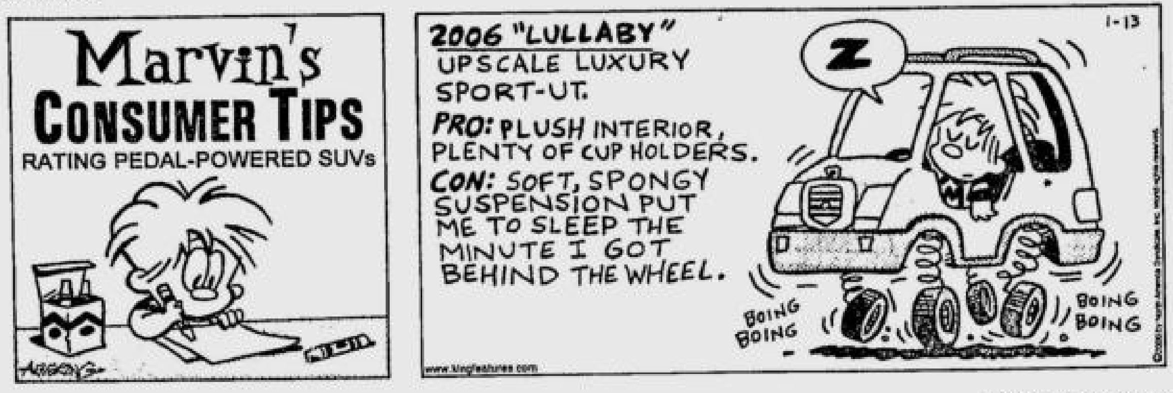
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


PETER, CHECK THIS OUT.
JASON MODIFIED THE CHESS PROGRAM SO I HAVE A KING AND 15 QUEENS, WHILE THE COMPUTER HAS A KING AND 15 PAWNS.
GET READY TO LAUGH.
CHECK-MATE. I WIN.
FORGET WHAT I SAID ABOUT LAUGHING.
TOO LATE.

MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


Marvin's CONSUMER TIPS
RATING PEDAL-POWERED SUVs
2006 "LULLABY" UPSCALE LUXURY SPORT-UT.
PRO: PLUSH INTERIOR, PLENTY OF CUP HOLDERS.
CON: SOFT, SPONGY SUSPENSION PUT ME TO SLEEP THE MINUTE I GOT BEHIND THE WHEEL.
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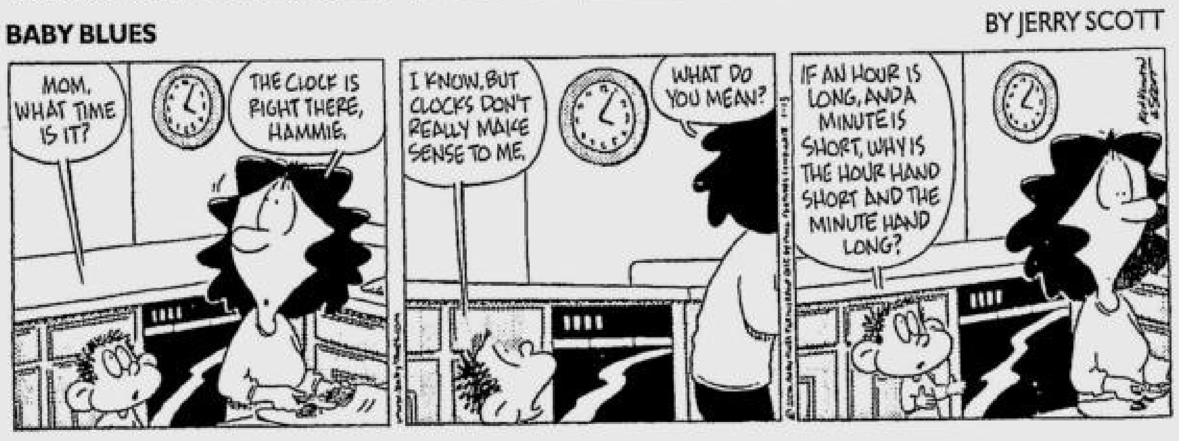
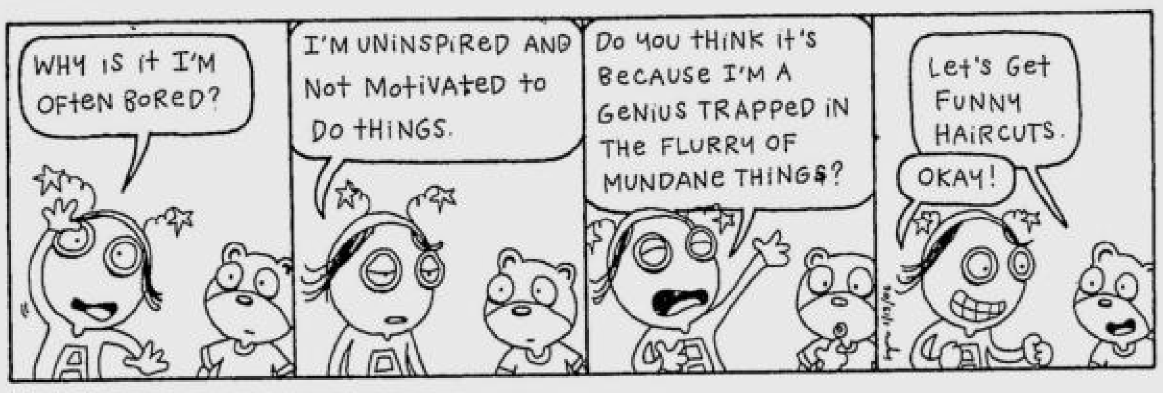
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MOM, WHAT TIME IS IT?
THE CLOCK IS RIGHT THERE, HAMMIE.
I KNOW, BUT CLOCKS DON'T REALLY MAKE SENSE TO ME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IF AN HOUR IS LONG, AND A MINUTE IS SHORT, WHY IS THE HOUR HAND SHORT AND THE MINUTE HAND LONG?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WHY IS IT I'M OFTEN BORED?
I'M UNINSPIRED AND NOT MOTIVATED TO DO THINGS.
DO YOU THINK IT'S BECAUSE I'M A GENIUS TRAPPED IN THE FLURRY OF MUNDANE THINGS?
LET'S GET FUNNY HAIRCUTS.
OKAY!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have high ambitions. You intend to be somebody. You also want security. Because of this, you work very hard. You need to have goals. You constantly want to improve your life and your footing in society. (You like to run the show.) The year ahead will be focused on your closest friendships and partnerships. **Birthdate of:** Orlando Bloom, actor; John Dos Passos, author; Julia Louis-Dreyfus, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You can definitely improve your reputation with bosses and parents today. All your ideas are excellent. Talk about how to best use resources. People are listening!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Unexpected travel plans with partners are exciting. Or you might be surprised to learn of your partner's travel plans. Matters related to publishing, travel, education and foreign countries are fresh and new!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a wonderful, exciting day for your sign. Something unexpected will come along that pleases you. New faces can also spice up your day. Could this be an opportunity for new love?

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Things are changing at work, but you accept this. You won't resist innovation or the introduction of better ways of doing things. Just take it slowly. Continue to welcome change.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Oo la la! New love can come your way today. Existing romance will get a pleasant jolt. Buy a present for your sweetie. Bring home a treat for children.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Something new and different introduced into your home could please you today. It could be high-tech, or it could be an unexpected guest. Just go with the flow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're full of ideas today. It's fun shopping, talking to others, and wheeling and dealing. You see new ways of looking at something.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Be open to new moneymaking ideas. Your mind is working very fast today. Some of you will get an unexpected job opportunity. Others will try to build a better mousetrap.

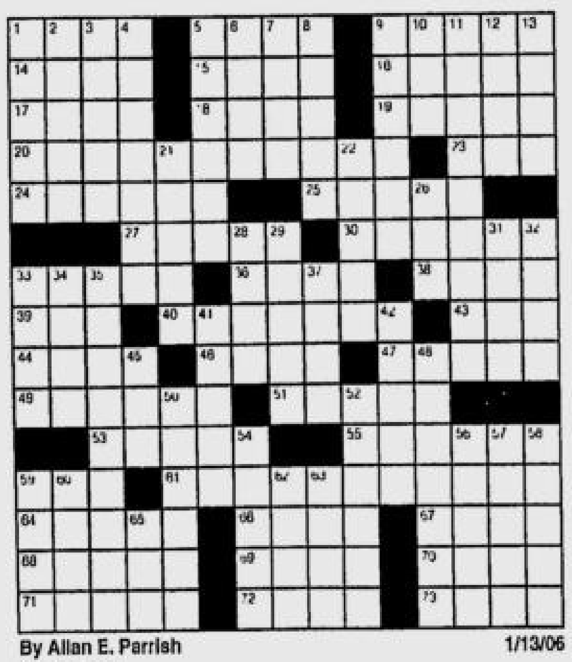
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Conversations with others are refreshing. Either you have surprise news or somebody else does. Quite likely you'll meet somebody new and different today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a great day for research. You can easily find answers to old problems. That's because you're prepared to see things in a completely new light.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Time spent with friends and groups will delight you today. New ideas pop up everywhere. People enjoy listening to you because you have an innovative way of seeing things. You're inventive!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You easily impress bosses, VIPs and parents today. You have a whole new take on things. Quite possibly, these people will surprise you. Something unexpected is afoot today.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Allan E. Parrish
Mentor, OH
1/13/06

ACROSS
1 Alum
5 Asking price
9 Fanatical
14 Stir up
15 Actor Sharif
16 Slur over
17 Self-images
18 Burrowing mammal
19 Niamey's place
20 Typical TV addict
23 Give the ax to
24 Trying time
25 Leg segment
27 "Bye Bye Bye" band
30 Familiarize
33 QB Favre
36 Acorns, later
38 Will of "The Waltons"
39 Designer Claiborne
40 Bronx nine
43 Great Lakes canals
44 Bushy 'do
46 Profound
47 Make changes
49 Batting position
51 Off. skill
53 Gdansk populace
55 Accent
59 Letters on a GI's letter
61 Quadrennial yachting competition
64 Goat/man creatures
66 Ashcroft's predecessor
67 Director Kazan
68 De Mille of dance
69 Actress Teri
70 Plaster backing strip
71 "Angie Baby" singer
72 Send forth
73 British gun

DOWN
1 __-Roman wrestling
2 Exactitude
3 So to be heard
4 Way down
5 Go along with
6 "Typee" sequel
7 Shaker contents
8 Pay for
9 "Luncheon of the Boating Party" painter
10 Clay, nowadays
11 Grand pooh-bah
12 Invention origination
13 Actress Laura
21 Precipitous
22 "__ Were the Days"
26 Singer's engagement
28 Zilch
29 Word following 20A, 61A, 11D and 35D
31 Light gas
32 Took steps
33 "Gil __"
34 Great __ Valley
35 16-ounce poet?
37 Retained
41 Revoke, once
42 Stocking stuffer
45 Lennon's Yoko
48 Tasty tidbits
50 Elegant
52 Accompany
54 Suit material
56 Brilliance
57 Connecting rooms
58 Brave lefty
59 Way off
60 Use a beeper
62 Paper quantity
63 Calvary letters
65 Buntline or Beatty

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

D	E	P	T	■	S	O	L	O	■	R	A	D	A	R
R	A	R	E	■	T	I	E	R	■	E	N	E	R	O
E	P	O	S	■	A	L	A	E	■	M	I	S	T	Y
D	O	N	T	E	V	E	R	S	L	A	M	■	■	■
D	E	E	P	R	E	D	■	■	O	N	E	I	L	L
■	■	■	I	R	S	■	C	L	A	D	■	M	I	A
C	A	R	L	O	■	P	L	O	D	■	B	A	G	S
A	D	O	O	R	■	Y	O	U	■	M	I	G	H	T
P	O	U	T	■	G	L	U	T	■	A	B	E	T	S
O	R	T	■	S	L	E	D	■	A	T	L	■	■	■
N	E	S	T	L	E	■	■	S	L	E	E	V	E	S
■	■	■	W	A	N	T	T	O	G	O	B	A	C	K
B	A	S	I	L	■	A	E	R	O	■	E	L	O	I
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H	A	R	E	M	■	S	K	Y	E	■	T	R	O	D

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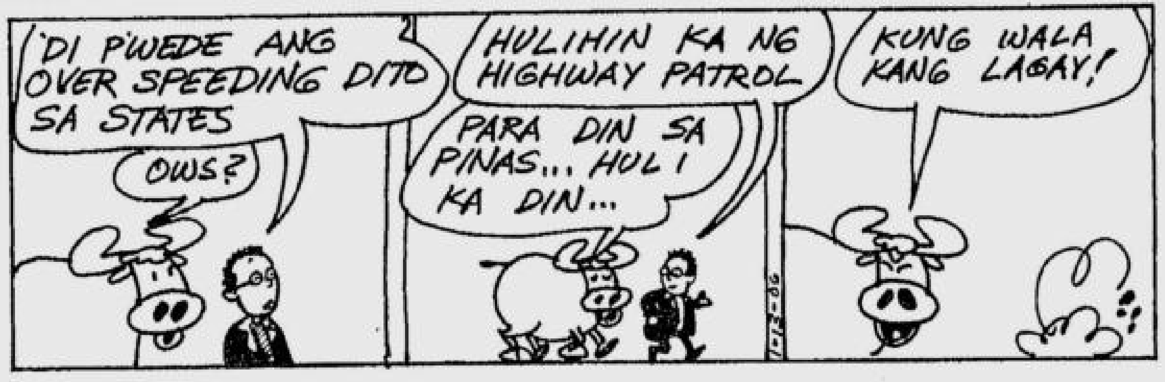
1/13/06

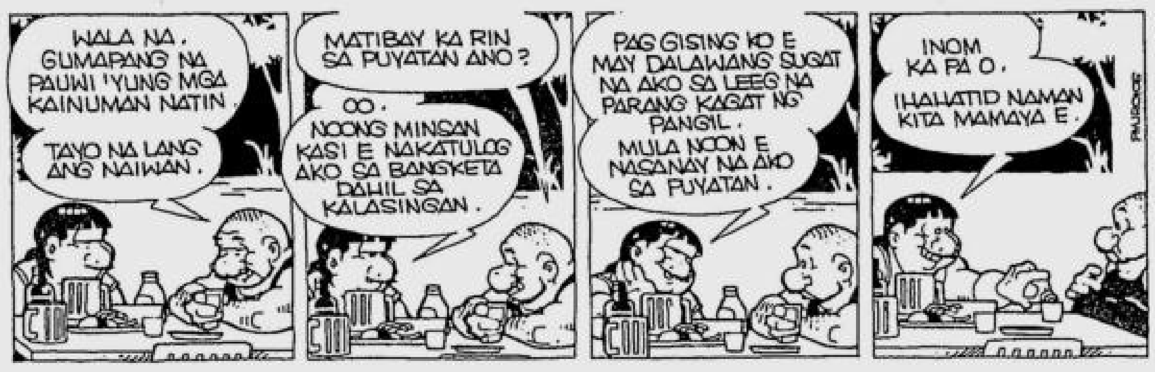
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


'DI PWEDE ANG OVER SPEEDING DITO SA STATES
OWS?
HULIHIN KA NG HIGHWAY PATROL
PARA DIN SA PINAS... HULI KA DIN...
KUNG WALA KANG LAGAY!
1-12-06

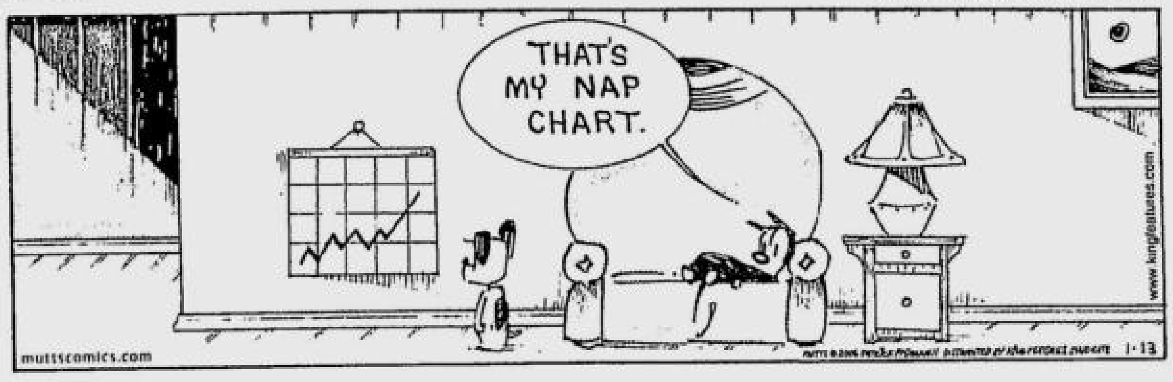
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


WALA NA. GUMAPANG NA PAUWI 'YUNG MGA KAINUMAN NATIN.
TAYO NA LANG ANG NAIWAN.
MATIBAY KA RIN SA PUYATAN ANO?
OO. NOONG MINSAN KASI E NAKATULOG AKO SA BANGKETA DAHIL SA KALASINGAN.
PAG GISING KO E MAY DALAWANG SUGAT NA AKO SA LEEG NA PARANG KAGAT NG PANGIL.
MULA NOON E NASANAY NA AKO SA PUYATAN.
INOM KA PA O.
IHAHATID NAMAN KITA MAMAYA E.

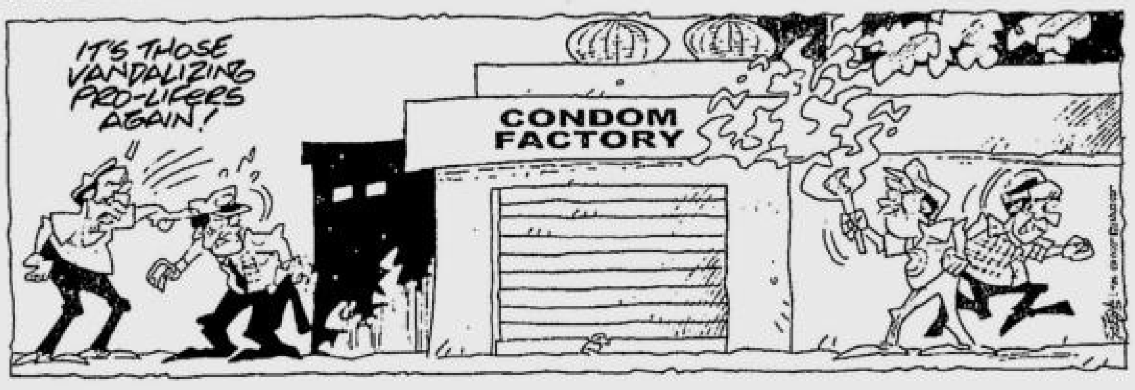
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


THAT'S MY NAP CHART.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
1-13

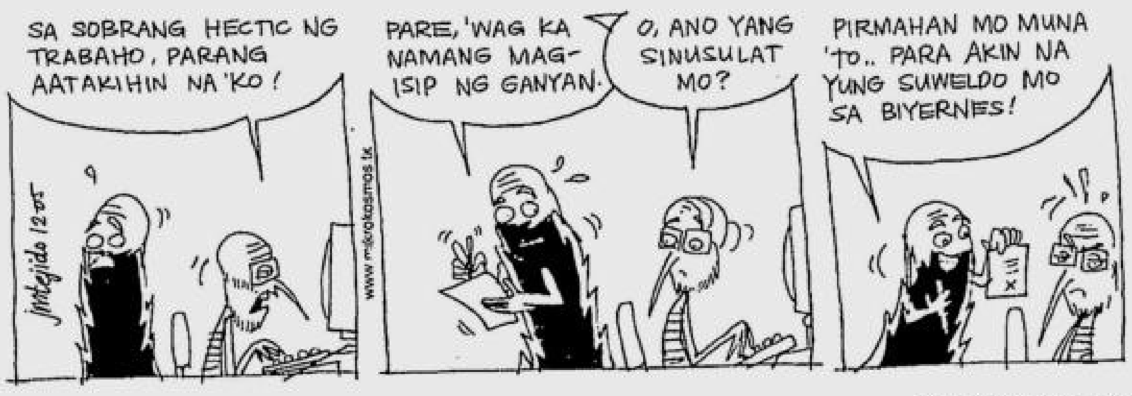
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


IT'S THOSE VANDALIZING PRO-LIFERS AGAIN!
CONDOM FACTORY

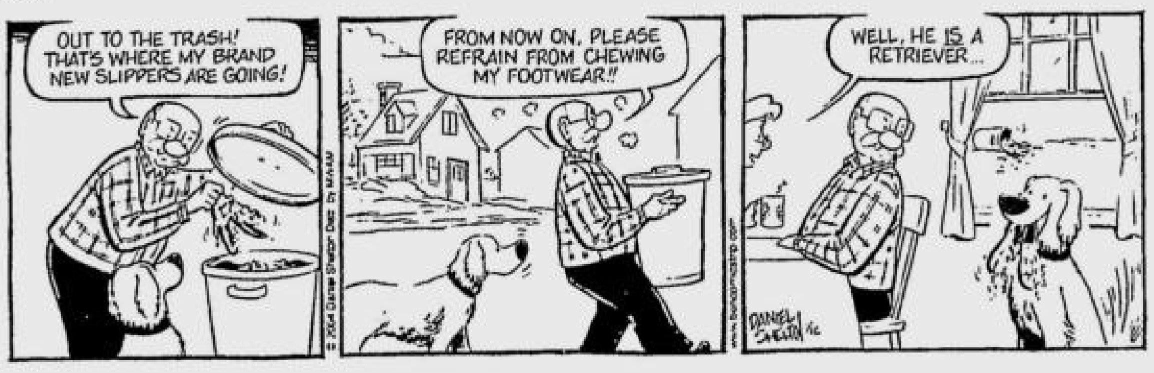
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SA SOBRANG HECTIC NG TRABAHO, PARANG AATAKIHIN NA 'KO!
jmtejido 12 05
www.mikrokosmos.tk
PARE, 'WAG KA NAMANG MAG-ISIP NG GANYAN.
O, ANO YANG SINUSULAT MO?
PIRMAHAN MO MUNA 'TO.. PARA AKIN NA YUNG SUWELDO MO SA BIYERNES!

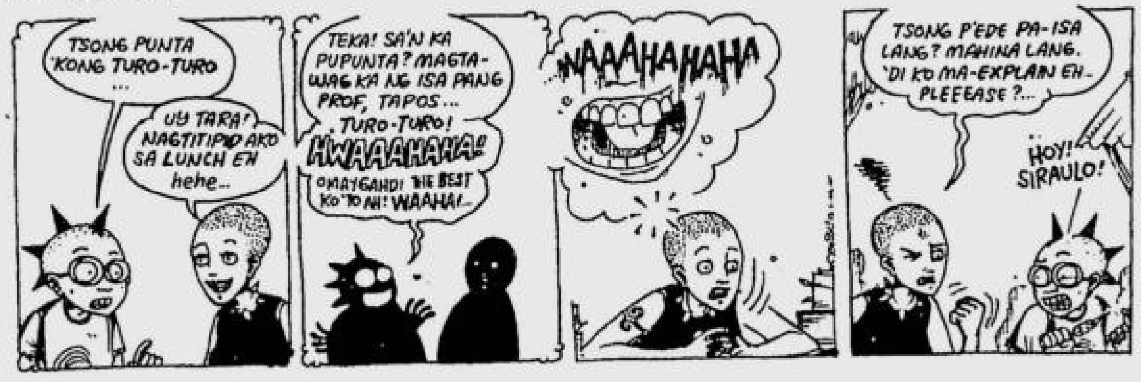
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OUT TO THE TRASH! THAT'S WHERE MY BRAND NEW SLIPPERS ARE GOING!
FROM NOW ON, PLEASE REFRAIN FROM CHEWING MY FOOTWEAR!!
WELL, HE IS A RETRIEVER...
DANIEL SHELTON

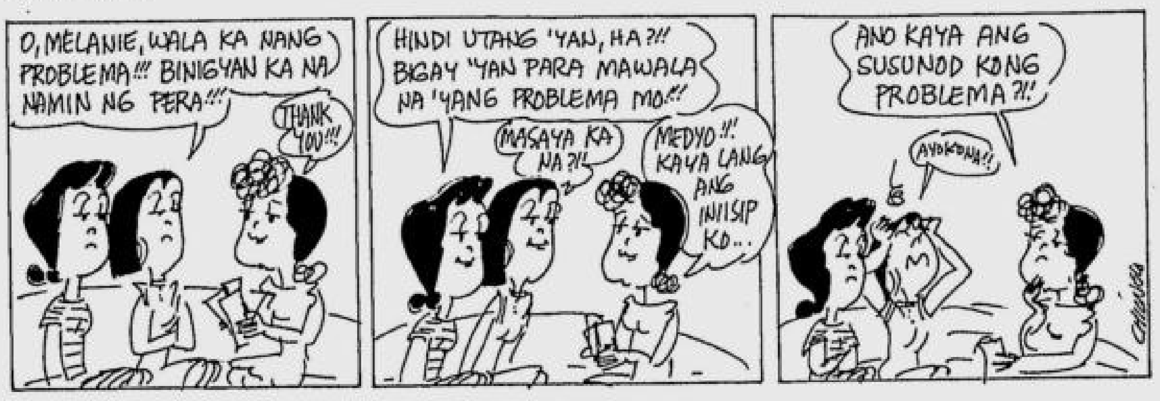
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TSONG PUNTA KONG TURO-TURO ...
UY TARA! NAGTITIPID AKO SA LUNCH EH hehe..
TEKA! SA'N KA PUPUNTA? MAGTA-WAG KA NG ISA PANG PROF, TAPOS... TURO-TURO!
HWAAAAHAHA!
OMAYGAHD! THE BEST KO 'TO NA! WAAHA!..
WAAAHAHAHA
TSONG P'EDE PA-ISA LANG? MAHINA LANG. 'DI KO MA-EXPLAIN EH.. PLEEEASE?...
HOY! SIRAULO!

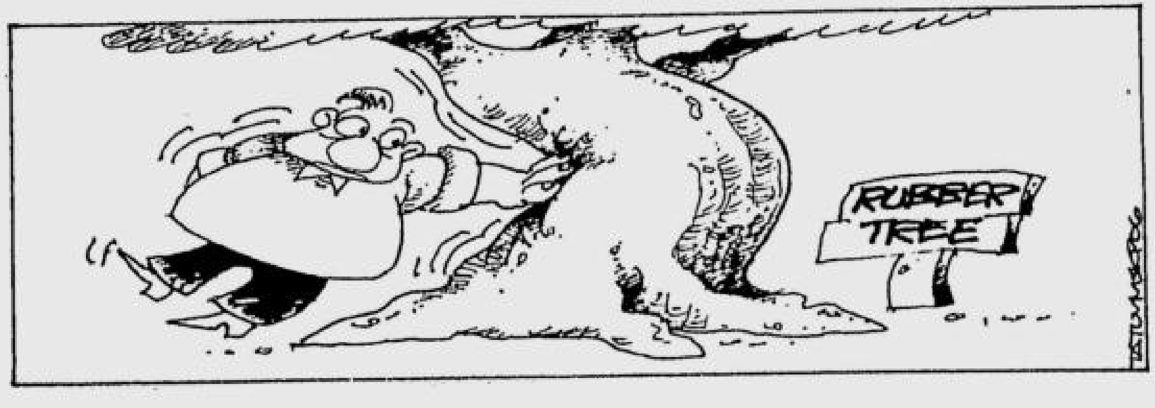
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


O, MELANIE, WALA KA NANG PROBLEMA!!! BINIGYAN KA NA NAMIN NG PERA!!!
THANK YOU!!!
HINDI UTANG 'YAN, HA?!! BIGAY 'YAN PARA MAWALA NA 'YANG PROBLEMA MO!!
MASAYA KA NA?!!
MEDYO!! KAYA LANG ANG INIISIP KO...
ANO KAYA ANG SUSUNOD KONG PROBLEMA?!!
AYOKONA!!
CHIONGLO

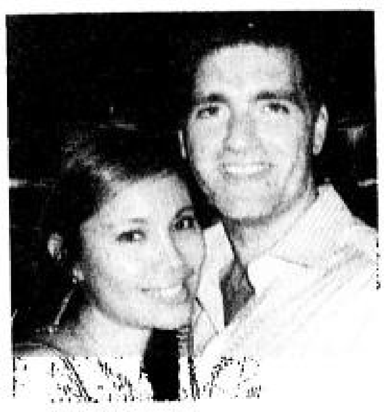
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


RUBBER TREE

MIA Tambunting and husband, businessman Manny Padilla

SADIE Callaghan with Mati's main gal Geni Psinakis


POPULAR lovers Jessica Guevarra and businessman Chris Parker

SUPER PALS. Cirkulo's Malou Gamboa and L'Oreal whiz Leica Carpo

US-BASED twosome home for the holidays. Pia Velasquez and fiancé Matt Gavigan

DELICIOUS-LOOKING Stacy Marcelo and free-again Anna Cu-unjieng

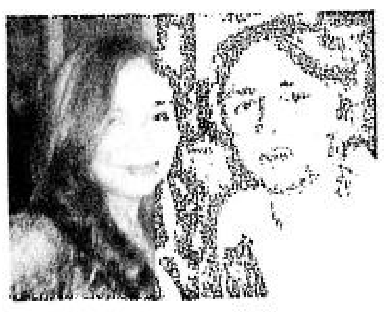
STYLISH Mega editor Carla Sibal, Shu Uemura's top gal Tina Tinio, and the other honoree, Pepper Teehankee

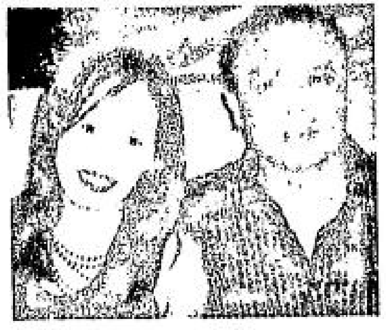
EMBASSY'S Eric Cua, honoree Celine Lopez and gorgeous Amanda Griffin

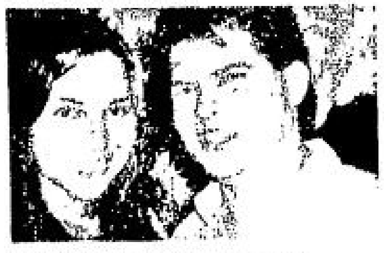
IÑIGO and Maricris Zobel, Nuvo and Citrus main man Louie Ysmael, *moi* and investment banker Noel Oñate

STILL on cloud honeymoon Jackie and Marco Antonio, with popular JR Isaac and in-demand couturier Rhett Eala

A party place reinvented


MARIKO Jacinto and Citrus architect-designer Anton Mendoza


ADORABLE couple Ana and Vince Bitong


BIANCA Zobel and Carlos Soriano II

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

THE BEST THINGS COME in small packages. This is what *moi* have to say about the super-new, *trés* chic bar of **Louie Ysmael**, *naturellement*, Citrus!

Once upon a time, it had been called Venezia. Later it was called V. Now, this cool so "in" hangout has opened its doors again to Cosmo Manille's partying pack.

The young, the hip, the swingers and the young at heart, *palanggas*, made a mad dash to Citrus when it threw a party in honor of **Celine Lopez** and **Pepper Teehankee**, *natch*, who were jetting off to foreign shores for their holiday break.

The *despedida* turned out to be one of the best-attended, awesome gatherings of the holiday season, dahlings.

The bubbly flowed, courtesy of my favorite champagne, Moet & Chandon, and nothing but first-class booze was served, fit for the classy Citrus crowd.

The gorgeously renovated bar, designed by architect **Anton Mendoza**, was yet to open its doors formally because, in Louie Y's words, "We wanted people to just hear and talk about it. The best way is to have parties like this. The super opening will definitely be after the holidays."

Already, Citrus is the talk of the town. The super cool, cozy and refreshing interiors consist of green-painted glass bars and mirrors, plus a super-intimate VIP area with an antique chandelier wrapped in an acrylic-tinted cylinder. The interiors are a masterwork of art only the creative Anton Mendoza could accomplish.

Everybody was raving about the place, from its great ambience to the fantastic sounds, care of the dudes who know what the partying set digs—**Tirso Garcia**, from Canada and New York, and fun DJ **Bombi Baiquiedra** of NBK fame.

Many people praised Citrus. One of them called it "a real true, cool club."

"It's not a club," said Louie. "We want to have a more intimate atmosphere where there is closer rapport among the guests. I think it's a good alternative to the big clubs around town."

And hey, it's a place where everyone is definitely eligible for fun, *palanggas*. Toasting the bubbly and rock-and-rolling was everyone you know and love—or hate. But then, you were there, too. I should know. I saw you.

Check Citrus out, *palanggas*, and get on a roll with our town's beautiful people.

New Tivoli

Mandarin Oriental Manila unveiled the new look of its fine-dining restaurant, The Tivoli, with the revival of classic tableside service. It now boasts of a stylish new setting that brings the days of elegant dining back: the wait staff dazzles diners with flambeing, slicing or saucing—making culinary art an awesome entertainment spectacle.

Says **Helmut Gaisberger**, general manager of the trend-setting hotel, "We are confident that our customers will be delighted with this new experience, as tableside cooking also allows for interaction between the diners and the staff. The dishes are prepared a la minute, and therefore fresh."

The chi-chi invitees were amazed at Tivoli's stylish new interiors by eminent designer **Sonia Santiago Olivares**.

The major eye-catcher was the strikingly elegant glass wine cellar encasing a semi-private section, which further evokes sophistication.

Tivoli's formal cocktail launch had all the classic elegant ingredients of days gone by. It drew hotshot personalities—from the diplomatic corps to the cultural elite and the business establishment, the *alta sociedad*, and media, *natch*.

The guests were serenaded by classic cool balladeer, **Arthur Manuntag**, who was accompanied on the piano by **Joey Casal**.

Heading the uppity A-list crowd were Mandarin Oriental Manila's fabulous first lady, vivacious **Vina Gaisberger**; Manila Mandarin Hotel Inc. and Jardine Davies' chief executive officer **Nonoy Colayco**; investment banker and Asian Spirit CEO **Noel Oñate**; Air Philippines' vice president for inflight service, the adorable **Patty Chiong**; the director of the American desk of the Board of Investments, **Robert Blume**; and eye-catching **Rosalie Escudero Blume**, among others.

Hey, elegant dining is back with a vengeance, *palanggas*. Check out Tivoli, open daily for lunch and dinner, Monday to Friday. For reservations, call the Mandarin at 7508888 locals 2431 to 2433.

ALBERTITO and attractive Emily Lopez with Stella Araneta

STEPHAN Vanderwallen, Mandarin's mega asset and PR doyen Charisse Chuidian, and Nandy Bengzon

TOASTING to the Tivoli restaurant: National Artist Arturo Luz, Jorge Araneta, Cebu's pride Ingrid Santamaria and Mandarin Oriental's popular GM Helmut Gaisberger

SISTERS ACT. Hip couturiers Juliet and Mimi Tan

FUN PACK. Vicki Perez de Tagle, Cristina Bradner and brother Axel, and Maritina Romulo

GORGEOUS LOOKERS. Cristina Garcia, Maricris Zobel, Samantha Eduque and New York-based mega chef Lorrie Reynoso

POPULAR interior designer Sonia Olivares, Saudi Arabia Ambassador Mohammed Ameen Wali, philanthropist and fashion plate Rose Marie Arenas and mega architect Gerry Contreras

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ZENCO SALES, INC.

Manila braces for Lacroix retrospective

PATIS Tesoro

RHETT Eala

From page C1

I'm very happy she's finding her way. Although my house is an empty nest, I'm not looking for romance. My goal is to get Appetite Ministry started. It's my way of giving back. A night of psalmody and food for the weary one night a month, care of Appetite and anyone else who wants to help out."

Margarita Fores: "To streamline Cibo operations [so that there'll be] greater quality control, better anticipation of clients' desires. Also spread the news that our South Beach Diet and other delivery operations, Sostanza Healthline, is in full swing. This '06 is my time to enter tableware—linen design I've always been passionate about; it will give me a new sense of fulfillment. Having my own home has made food and home design come together. I love absolutely where I am today, a sense of wonder and newness overwhelms me."

Anna de Villa-Singson: "I no longer plan. I have recognized the limits of my intelligence and abilities [so now] I bow to infinite wisdom. I'm at the beginning, where all things are possible."

Chito Vijandre and Ricky Toledo: "To lay the groundwork for a new store concept. We're at a point when there's no point in adhering to preconceived stages in life."

Debbie Enriquez: "It's the year of the Dog and the world is still my oyster. With my two daughters in the top 10 percent of Singapore students in their age group, a soulmate and a new career should give a new take on 'carpe diem.'"

Albert Almendralejo: "To produce events that become a legacy like Close-up's Lovapalooza and Ponds' Essence of Beauty. It's time for introspection and spiritual growth… "

Conrad Onglao: "I'm almost sure I'll find the love of my life and get married the next day. I would like to do more challenging work outside Manila, spend more quality and fulfilling time with my boys, then my life would be full and complete."

Efren Ocampo: "To reach a certain level of happiness, not to be too hard on myself, to be more creative and positive, to compete with the deluge of cheap imports by making beautiful fine clothes, specialized clothes."

Inno Sotto: "To go the extra mile to connect, to truly show appreciation for the treasures of my heart. To learn a new thing or two, like another language, or cooking. To find time to go back to volunteer work on weekends. Having closed a chapter in my life, I am now both in the Genesis and the Book of Revelations of my life."

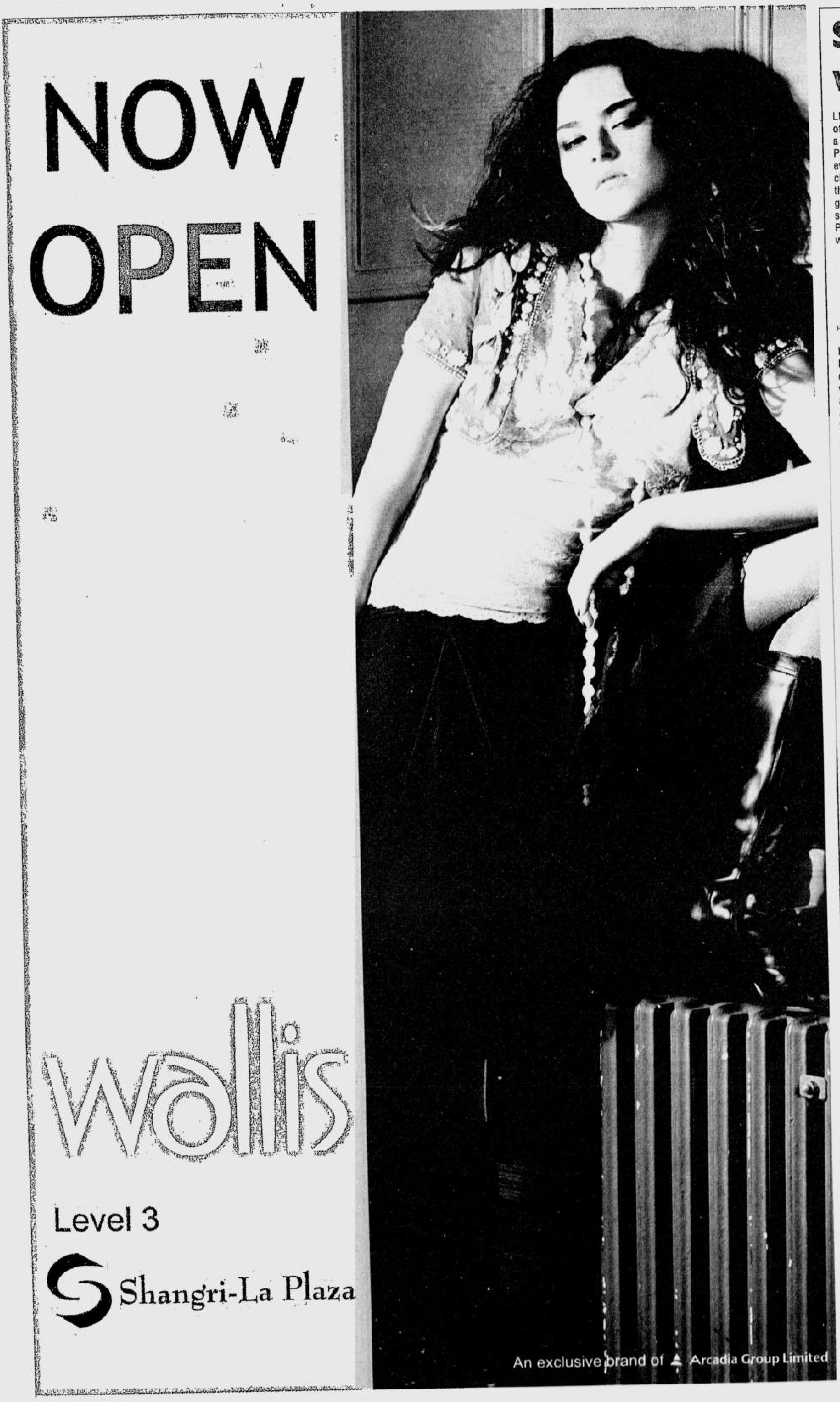
Except for Conrad's finding the love of his life and marrying the next day, I don't think any of the above was said tongue in cheek. More "lifestylistas" next week.

DITA Sandico-Ong

RANDY Ortiz

RAJO Laurel

FRANNIE Jacinto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GOINGS ON

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LULU CASTAGNETTE, THE FASHION BRAND of freshness, color and style, offers shoppers a chance to travel with its Shop Your Way to Paris promo. The promo is until Feb. 12. With every P250 purchase, a customer gets a Special Receipt Code that will qualify him/her for the raffle. Ten weekly winners will each get a gift pack which contains Lulu Castagnette T-shirt, stuffed teddy bear and makeup plus a P400 discount coupon. Two weekly winners will each get a pair of jeans, one Beary charm and P400 discount coupon. Grand prize is a four-day, three-night trip to Paris for two with accommodations and a personalized tour of the Lulu Castagnette Paris shop. Five consolation prizes of P10,000 worth of Lulu Castagnette gift certificates will also be given. For more chances to win, listen to Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 88.9, 95.5 RT, 103.5 K-lite and text "LULU <space> RADIO" to 210 for Smart/TNT, 2800 for Globe/TM and 2288 for Sun Cellular. Visit Lulu Castagnette at 2/L, Glorietta 4, and Rustan's U Floor at Alabang Town Center. For more information, text LULU <space> HELP to the numbers mentioned.

SALE. Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall offers up to 50-percent discount until Jan. 15, in its mall-wide sale. Every P500 single purchase may be exchanged for a coupon in the Shopping Surprises Raffle Promo. Shoppers can win a brand-new car, home appliances and gift certificates in the second grand draw on June 23. Only receipts dated Dec. 12, 2005-June 18 are qualified. Meanwhile, the Mr. & Ms Sexy Body 2006 elimination rounds will be on Jan. 13 and 20, at The Brick Road. Semi-final round is on Jan. 21; grand finals on Feb. 18.

FORUM. The Japan Foundation will hold the Japanese Language Education Forum in Mindanao, Jan. 20, at University of the Philippines, Terraza Milleza Bldg., F. Inigo cor. Rizal Sts., Davao City. Deadline for submission of registration forms is on Jan. 16. Call the Japan Foundation Manila at 8116155 or MKD Nihongo Center, Davao City at (082)2330013/0081.

DESIGN CONTEST. The deadline for submission of entries for the Wall of Remembrance Design Contest is extended to Jan. 16. Entries must reflect the themes of martyrdom, nationalism and love for country. The winner will receive P150,000. Entry forms are available at the National Historical Institute and through its website, www.nhi.gov.ph. Call NHI Historic Preservation Division at 5231039/0905.

SCHOLARSHIP. The Philippine Institute of Japanese Language and Culture and the Toshiba International Foundation are offering a full-tuition waiver to a teacher training program. The scholarship is open to all education (BSE/BSEED) as well as Japan Studies majors who want to become Japanese language teachers. The program consists of a nine-month intensive Japanese language course (25 hours/week from mid-March to mid-December). Deadline for the submission of application forms is Jan. 27. Call 7353179/2920 or 8924916/19. Fax 7353005 and 8174064.

LECTURES. ARE and the Serenity Healing Center will offer free lectures on health care, this January . All lectures will be held at 5 B Gen. Capinpin St., Antonio Village, Pasig City. Lectures start at 6:30 p.m. Call 6345058.

KIDS CRAFTS. Starland Themepark and Resort at 4/L, Metropolis Star, Alabang offers special workshops for kids 12 years old and below. At 4 p.m. on Jan. 15, handmade paper puppets made out of recyclable materials such as shopping bags will be presented in a puppet show at Starland Activity Area. The workshop on Coffee Coin Bank and Money Coin Crafts will be held Jan. 22, and Mexican Crafts featuring the Paper Bag Monster Piñata on Jan. 29. Call 8504283.

REUNION. The Barasoain Memorial Elementary School Class 1950 will hold a reunion on Jan. 31, at Club Royale, Malolos, Bulacan. Call Marciano Cardenas (044)6628111, Luningning Rivera (044)7917082 and Rosal Yniguez-Bulaong 6558622.

LIFESTYLE
FASHION
Sizzling trends

Contributing editors
Jenni Epperson
and Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

(FROM LEFT) Dries Van Noten, Dior Homme, Chanel, Emilio Pucci, Ralph Lauren, Prada

BACKGROUND PHOTO FROM WWW.ANDREW.CMU.EDU

“Sizzling trends...”

Compiled by Jenni Epperson
shoppingera/pole dancer

"Healthy food will continue to be the major trend. It will be mainly Asian but with Western influences. With clean presentation, less decoration and garnishing."
—Christopher Romine, executive chef, Makati Shangri-La Hotel/ Elvis impersonator

"There will be a clear break from the past... It will be an era-defining moment called Now. Taking the cue from *lola* Madonna, 'future disco' will reign supreme, making partyphiles dance nonstop. Chill-axing will take place in the comfort of each other's homes, and what happens next is up to you."
—Tim Yap, Embassy Club owner, Inquirer Super! creative director/contortionist

"Club music for 2006 are glam funk, fusion hip hop and disco."
—Jon "Johnny Verse" Herrera, DJ/Playboy mansion pool boy

"For interiors, we will see luxury returning as an option to the minimalism of recent years: more patterns, a return to color, a multi-layered cultural approach, and hopefully more environmentally friendly."
—Miguel Rosales, interior decorator/ aesthetic elitist/kept man

"Shooting digital will put more control, creativity and design in the hands of photographers. Anything is possible and limited only by one's imagination."
—Tom Epperson, photographer/Hawaiian Tropics professional body oil applicator

"Super-sized accessories—big bags, wide belts, super long necklaces, plastic Jackie O. shades, and gargantuan charm bracelets."
—Mel Cuevas, new Metro editor in chief/professional D.I.

"With the boom in tourism, people will be looking for more privacy and personalized service that will take them away from the maddening crowd."
—Lex Ledesma, Nami resort owner/ karaoke superstar

"Monochromatic, white look will rule—from baroque at Balenciaga to baby-doll dresses at Chloe."
—Carla Sibal, Mega editor in chief/chef wannabe

"Lilac, mauve and taupe will be surefire hits for beauty this year. Wear them sheer on lids and lips. Look out for creamy textures with a hint of shimmer."
—Agoo Bengzon, Preview beauty editor/closet shoe addict

"Last year was all about long and golden highlights for the hair. This year, my inspiration is Casanova Venice. It's all about super short hairstyles. Whether your hair is straight or wavy, it's time to prune those unruly tresses and give them a new healthy life, just like plants. Exciting hair colors in the most vivid jewel tones like brown and lavender, highlights in copper and bronze, and hints of cranberry and magenta shades will definitely spice up any length."
—Henri Calayag, hair master for H Salon/courtesan

"For men, watch faces that are exposed, such as skeleton style-exposed movement in front and see-through back to better appreciate movement finish and design. Large cases in 44-47 mm will reign. For women, men's watch in 39-42 mm cases will continue its popularity. Jewelry, precious stones on case, colored or rubber on steel straps and interchangeable straps, will be hot for mixing and matching with different outfits."
—Emerson Yao, Lucerne owner/belly-dancing instructor

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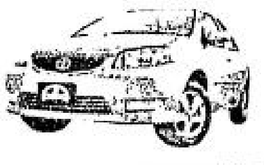

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Cagayan De Oro City
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San Fernando City Supermarket
KIMSHOPPE,
Cagayan De Oro City

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Cagayan De Oro City
(Store Partner: P1,000)
FLEURETTES
Berma Center, Baclaran
LUCKY EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY
Legazpi City
KIMSHOPPE
Cagayan De Oro City

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(25" Sony Flat Colored TV)
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Pasig City
PABLITO E. DACALCAP JR.
San Fernando City, La Union
ETHEL V. PADOR
Altavas Aklan
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The look book

Here are the trends that will fuel 2006

Jenni Epperson

I LOVE TRENDS.

Trends are exciting.

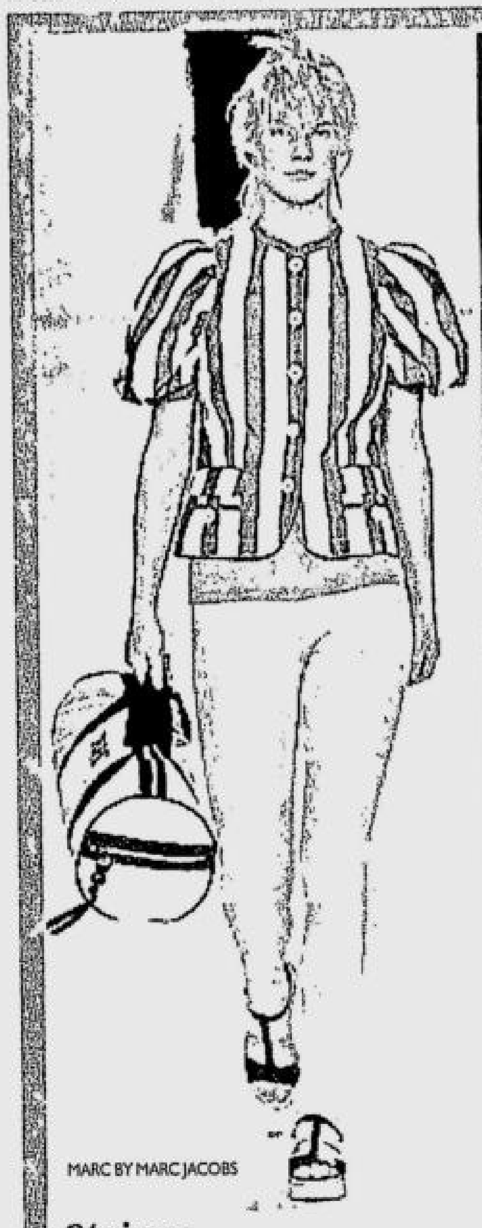
Trends are inspiring.

Trends fuel the fashion industry.

Trends give jobs to models, makeup artists, photographers, stylists, hair dressers, sales ladies, store managers, factory workers, beaders, sewers, fabric makers, designers, advertising agencies, secretaries, messengers, couriers, press release agents, bookers, celebrities, tailors, writers, publishers, security guards, talent managers, cotton pickers, cashiers, students, directors, fashion editors, teachers, graphic artists, manufacturers and assistants.

While others turn their noses up at trends, I turn my nose to the next hottest thing.

E-mail the author at jfashion@inquirer.com

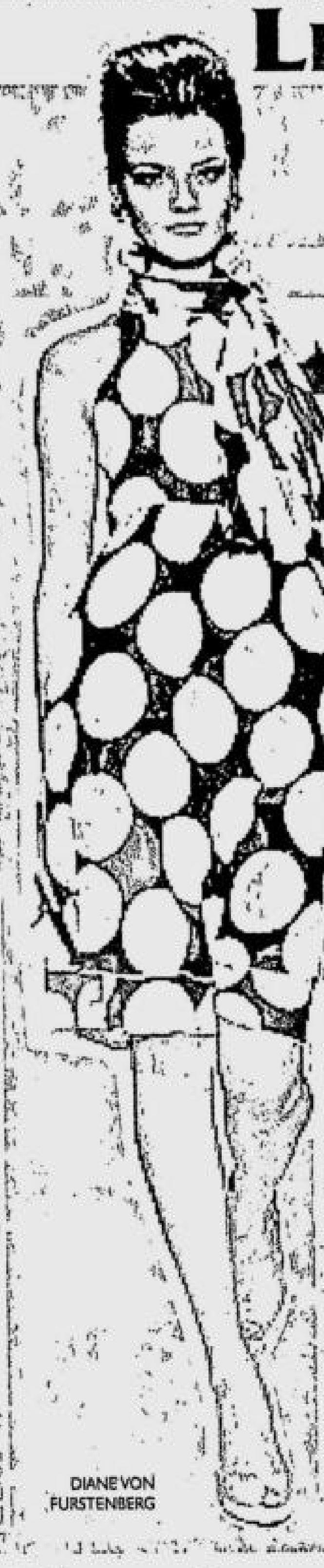

MARC BY MARC JACOBS

ETRO

LUELLA

Stripes

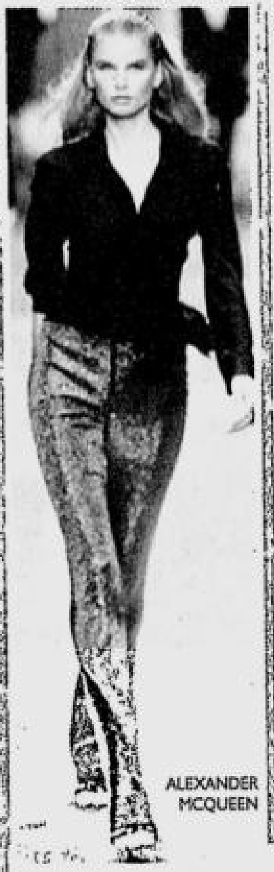
Besides being a casual Friday's favorite, these nautical streaks will broaden your fashion horizon. Break free from the constricting lines of a button-down polo, and pair your suit with a striped tee for a fun corporate look.


DIANE VON FURSTENBERG

LOUIS VUITTON

Graphics

Geometric gems will replace tired paisley appliqués. Circles, squares and octagons in patchwork or a bold print are the style bull's-eye this season.

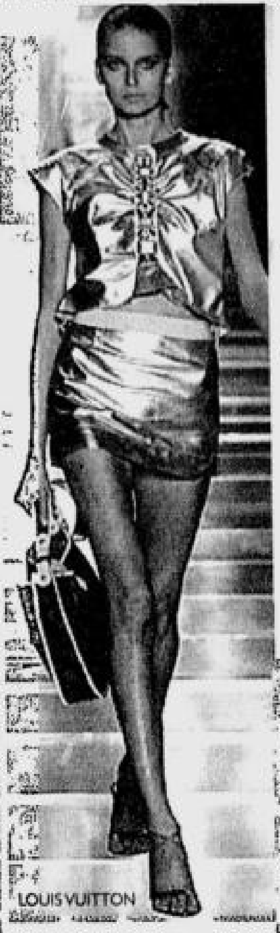

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

CHRISTIAN DIOR

ZAC POSEN

Lean pants

More forgiving than the Flash Dance leggings garb, these image aides help you stand tall and proud. Get a leg up in style—lean pants make the thigh look slim and the legs look long.

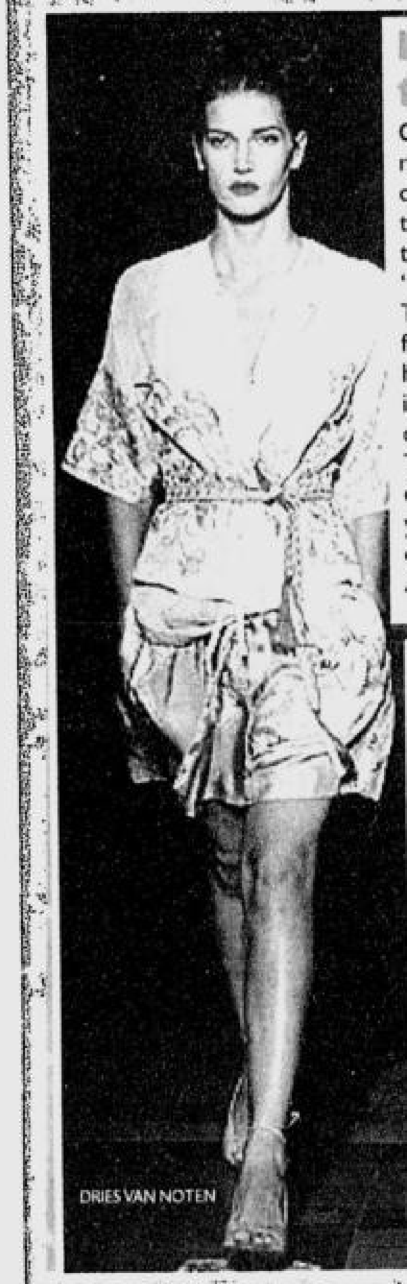

LOUIS VUITTON

EMILIO PUCCI

ZAC POSEN

Gold lamé

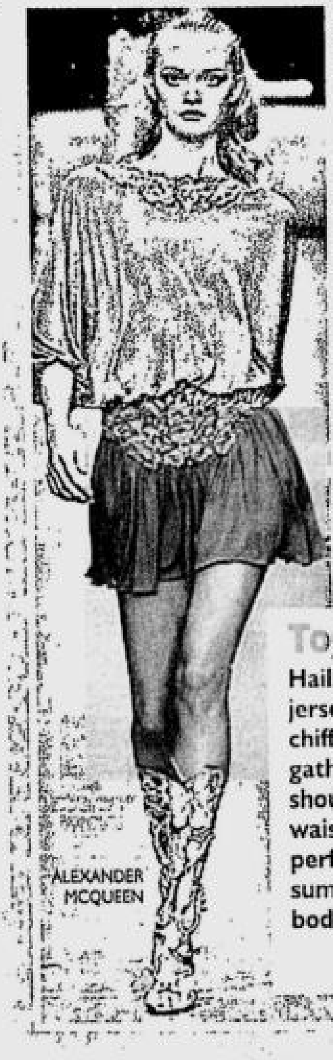
Since neutrals are favored this year (sorry, rainbow-bright babes) and the minimalist look is all the rage (sigh), this hot metal marvel will be the perfect contrast to this season's flesh tones.


DRIES VAN NOTEN

LOUIS VUITTON

Kimono tops

Geisha glam makes a comeback, this time less edgy than Madonna's "Frozen" getup. These Oriental favorites are hotter than ever in fire-engine red or icy white. They will definitely make you look courtesan chic. Arigato!


ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

VERSACE

Toga dress

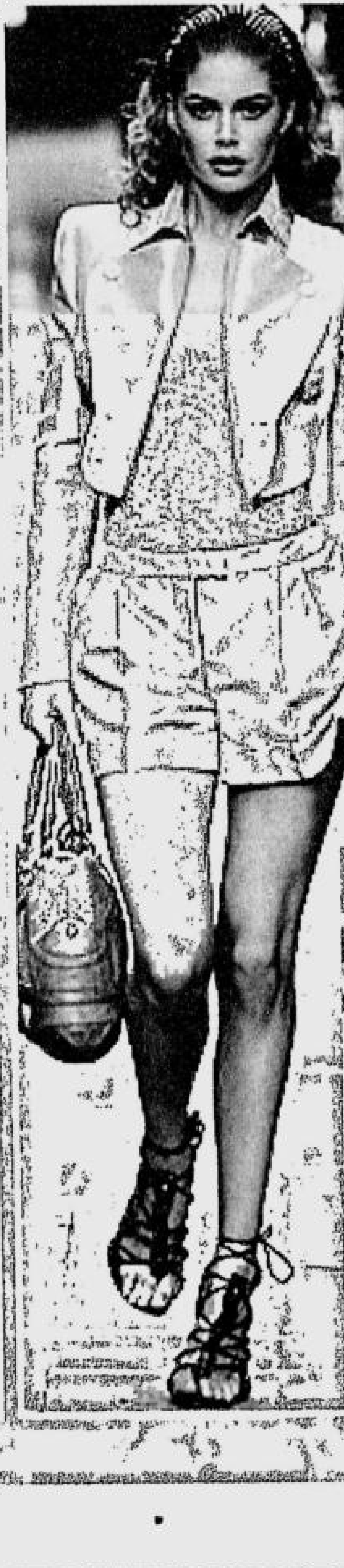
Hail sexy! Swingy jersey or flimsy chiffon fabrics gathered at the shoulders, hips or waist, create the perfect arena for summer's heavenly bods.

HERMÈS

TOMMY HILFIGER

Shirt dress

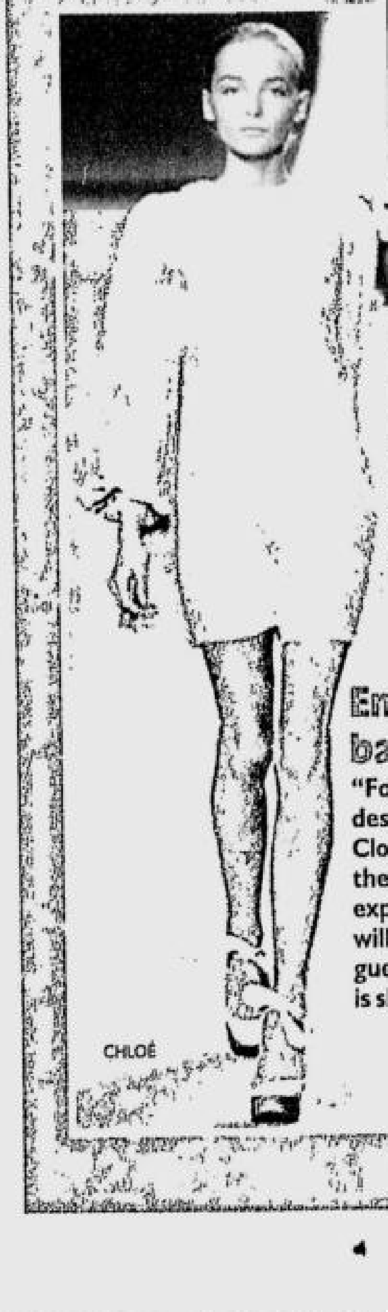
Long button-down shirts resembling your man's pajama top—they're sexy and versatile. They are a staple from the office desk to debauchery.


ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

ZAC POSEN

Cropped jacket

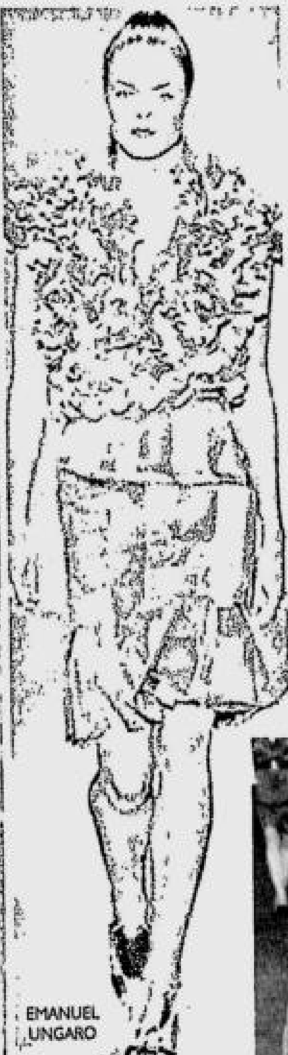
The cropped jacket is a metamorphosis of the Boho-look survivor, the bolero. Made with warmer fabric and a more structured shape, this preferred cover-up by tropical dwellers will surely transcend all seasoned styles.


CHLOÉ

STELLA McCARTNEY

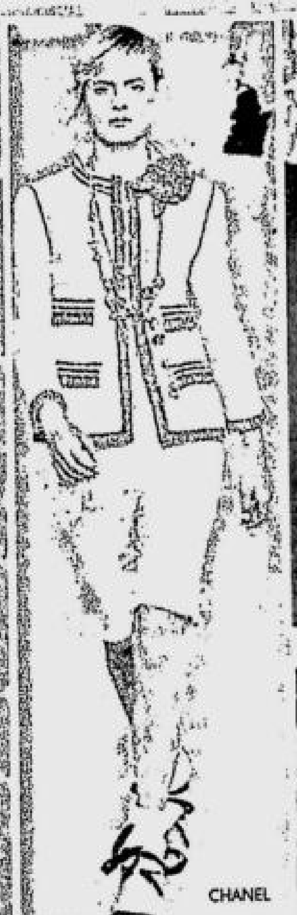
Empire cut/ baby doll dress

"Forever young" best describes this style. Clothes that conceal the womanly curves and expose ingénue limbs will keep others guessing... how young is she?


EMANUEL UNGARO

Ruffles

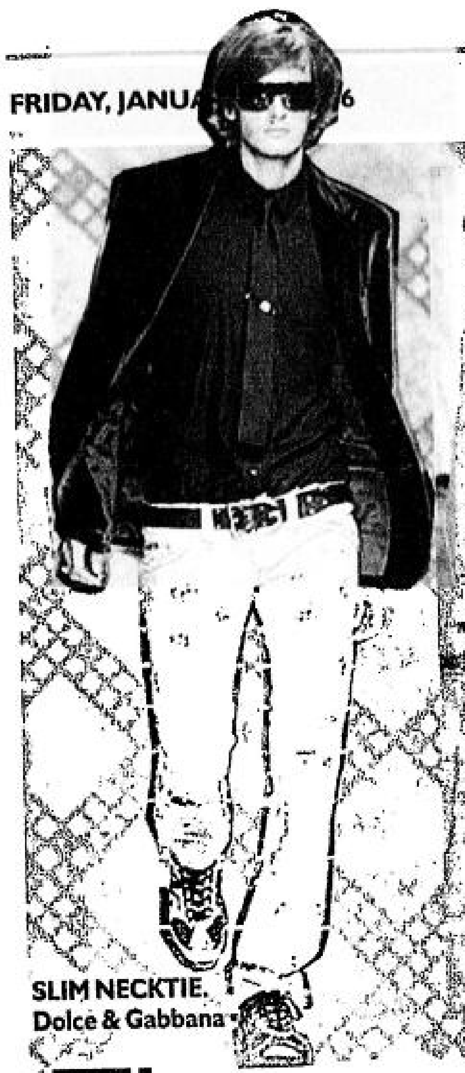
A softer way to frame your face (or décolletage), these flirty adornments add just the right amount of femininity yet make a bold enough statement to command attention. So go ahead, create waves wherever you go.

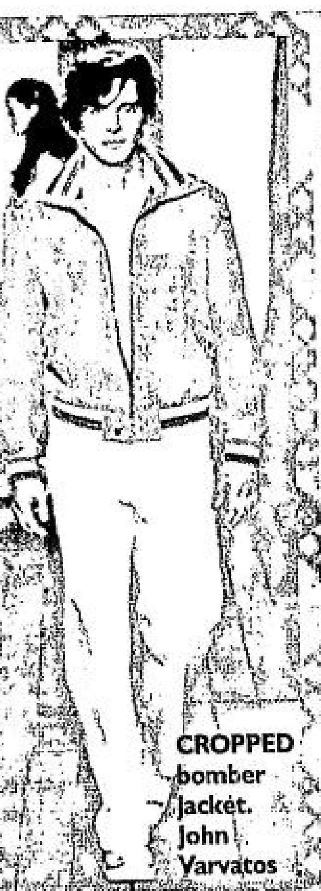

CHANEL

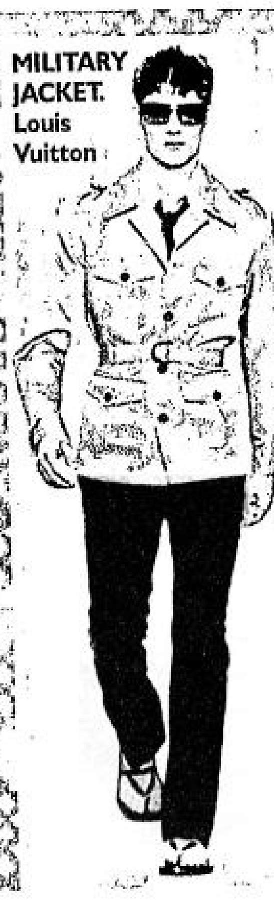
Bermuda shorts

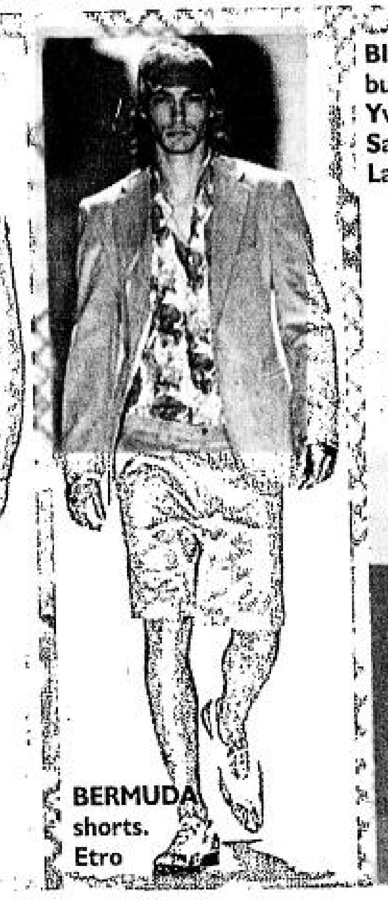
You must add these pieces to your office wardrobe especially since you're living in a tropical country where a trip to the ground floor coffee shop is like a trip to the sauna. It's time to amend the company dress code.

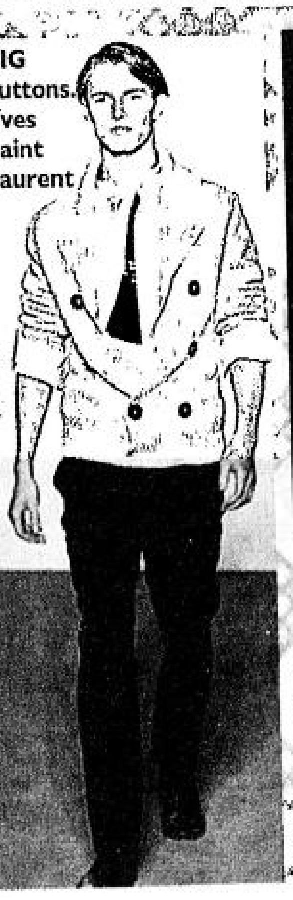
PHOTOS FROM WWW.STYLE.COM

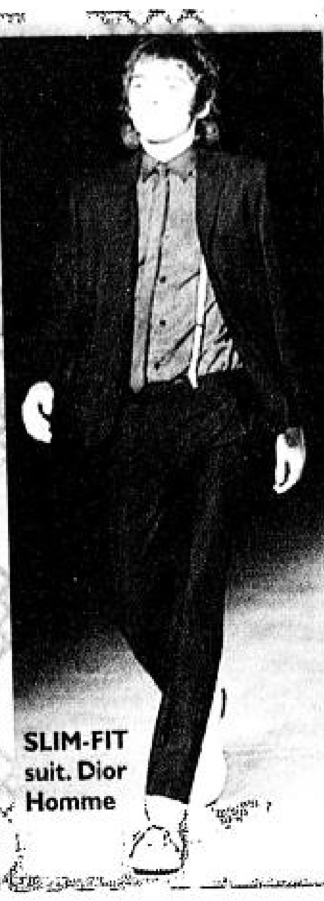

SLIM NECKTIE. Dolce & Gabbana

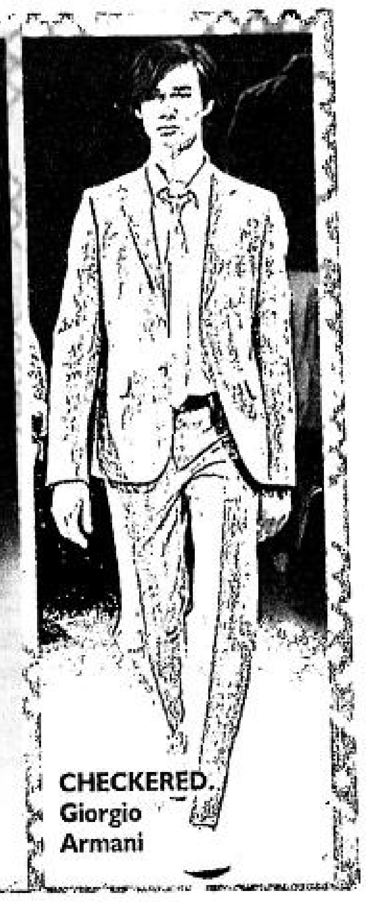

CROPPED bomber Jacket. John Varvatos


MILITARY JACKET. Louis Vuitton


BERMUDA shorts. Etro


BIG buttons. Yves Saint Laurent


SLIM-FIT suit. Dior Homme


CHECKERED. Giorgio Armani

The man show

The Steve McQueen look—slim trousers, trim ties, curt shorts—is back

By Alex Y. Vergara

AS FAR AS MEN'S FASHION GOES, 2006 is shaping up as a throwback to the 1960s. Slim trousers, trim ties, "short shorts" and cropped jackets inspired by Steve McQueen's character in the movie "Bullitt" are among the trends expected to hit stores and come out of many a fashion designer's atelier in the weeks and months to come.

Don't despair if you've thrown away your *lolo*'s vintage sharkskin suits and acid-colored shirts spun from synthetic knits. Today's reissue of the 1960s look is nothing like those. In keeping with men's active lifestyles, this season's clothes are softer, lighter and versatile.

White leather shoes a la Agent X44 a.k.a. Tony Falcon (the Pinoy version of 007)—oh my God!—aren't likely to make a comeback either. With summer just a warm sea breeze away, now is the time to start investing on espadrilles, sneakers, sandals and a rainbow of flip-flops.

Silver and leather dog tags and wayfarer sunglasses are among this year's must-have accessories. Weekender bags made of canvas and accented with leather strips as well as woven belts that combine leather and canvas also deserve some space in your already cramped closet.

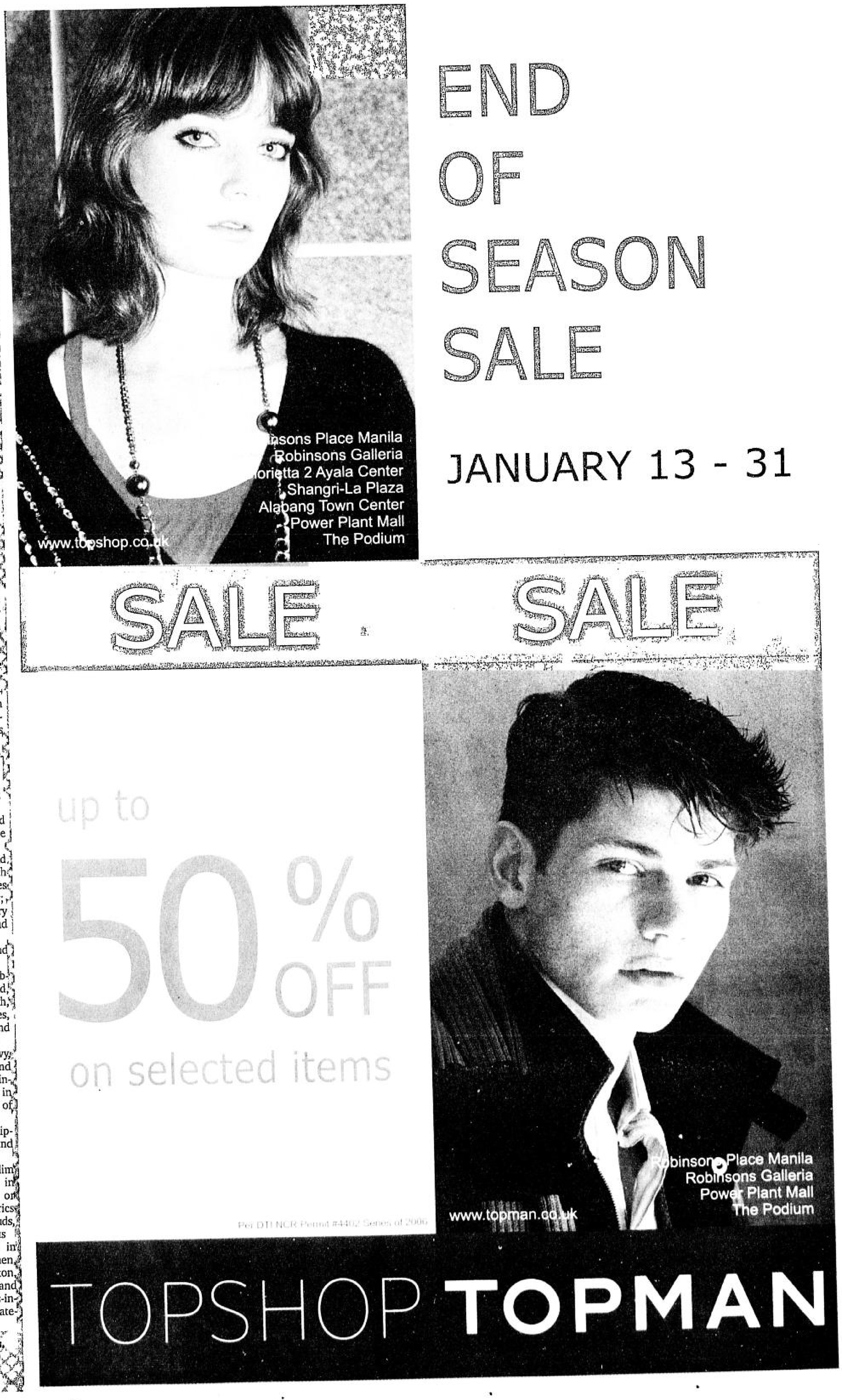
Leading menswear designers Randy Ortiz and Marden Iglesias, who provided me with precious inputs, have surprisingly come out with similar forecasts that centered on the trim, the slim and the easy (uh oh, time to hit the gym) with nautical, military and a bit of the South Hampton flavors thrown in.

Here are 12 trends in 2006 fashion-forward men should watch out for:

1. Slim-fit jackets with narrow lapels;
2. Shorter cropped and bomber jackets;
3. Slim-fit and low-rise trousers;
4. Bermuda shorts, "short shorts" and so-called cut-off walking shorts above the knee;
5. Earth tones such as khaki, beige and burnt brown, and seascape neutrals such as sand, ivory, stone and sky with splashes of citrus, orange and tomato for day wear;
6. Shirts in bright shades such as canary yellow, carnation pink, aubergine and chartreuse;
7. Black, white and beige for night;
8. Patterned fabrics like glen plaid, hound's tooth, jacquard, stripes, gingham and herringbone;
9. Navy, nautical and military inspirations in the form of multiple pockets, zippers and epaulets;
10. Slim neckties in patterned or plain silk fabrics;
11. Metal studs, buttons and rivets
12. Fabrics in washed twill, linen, stretched cotton, seersucker and floaty, Madras-inspired cotton materials.

LOW-RISE jeans, Dsquared2

PHOTOS FROM WWW.MENSTYLE.COM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Excess-orize!

Big, bold accessories are this season's standouts

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE NEW year is upon us, and together with it, a new set of fashion trends that are inspiring and exhilarating.

Although it can be quite difficult to keep up with fashion's ever-changing moods, the ever-resourceful and imaginative fashionista will undoubtedly find a way.

Barring a total change of wardrobe, a surefire and cost-effective way to update your look is through the use of accessories. There are fresh pickings every season, and spring/summer's crop is an array of up-to-the-minute, irresistible choices.

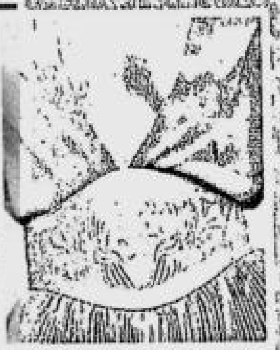
So, go ahead and add a bit of flourish and personal style to an otherwise boring or dated ensemble by picking any of this coming season's standout accessories:

E-mail the author at afashion@inquirer.com.ph

EMILIO PUCCI

Super-sized bag

A carryall of über proportions is as au courant as a cute little handbag that's roomy enough for all your essentials, minus the kitchen sink!



Wide belt

Fashion is more womanly this coming season, so invest in a wide belt to accentuate the waistline or to emphasize an already shapely figure.

Straw hat

Get a head start (no pun intended) by donning a wide-brimmed straw hat that's perfect protection from the sun's searing rays and a stylish treat for all chapeaux fanatics.

Flower pin

Fashion is abloom with romance and femininity, so pin on a pretty silken flower and channel your inner Coco or Carrie.

Patent bag

Yes, patent, otherwise known as charol, is back! Make a splash by wearing a shiny bright bag matched with clashing, bright-colored clothes.

LANVIN
CHLOÉ

Necktie

Or why not channel your inner Katharine Hepburn by wearing a skinny tie? Create a bit of irony by matching it with ultra-feminine pieces like a stylized flower on your hair or a streamlined and subtly sexy pencil skirt.

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Gladiator sandals

Launch a thousand ships in ultra-sexy gladiator sandals that are all you need to show off endless gams and well-groomed tootsies.

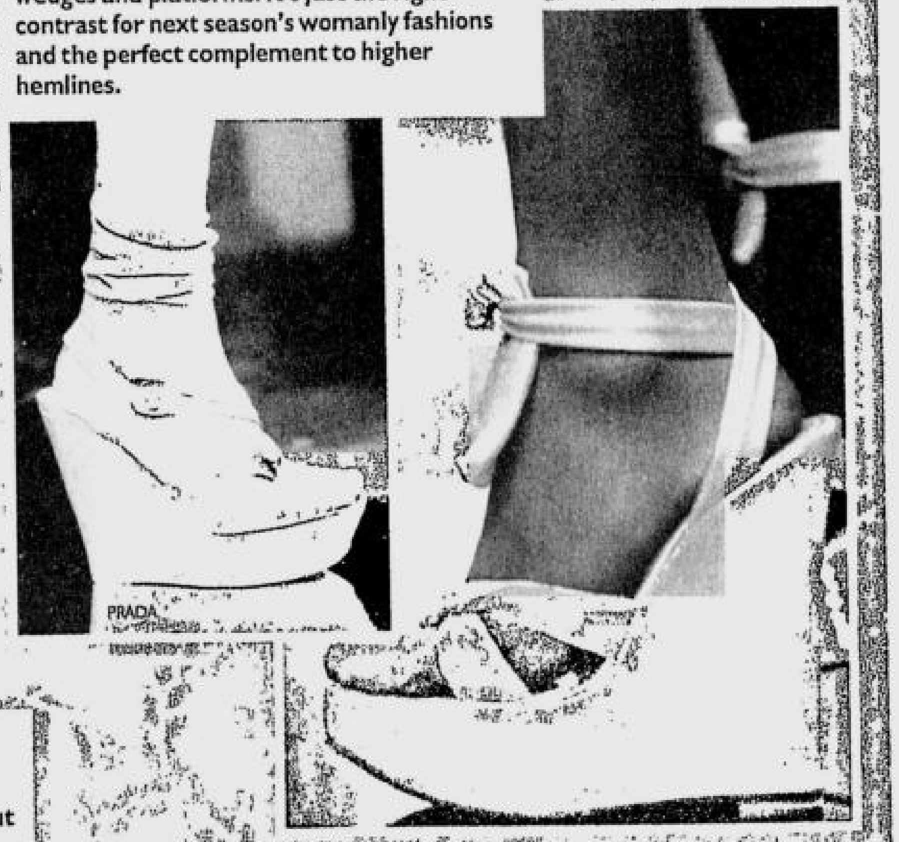
EMILIO PUCCI

Gold bangle

Perk up your spring/summer wardrobe by wearing a thick gold bangle or cuff that's simple yet smart.

Wedge sandals

The chunky heel is back in the form of wedges and platforms. It's just the right contrast for next season's womanly fashions and the perfect complement to higher hemlines.



Patent shoes

Shine on in trendy patent shoes that are high in style but undeniably fun and fancy.

MARC BY MARC JACOBS
PRADA

CAROLINA HERRERA

Long necklace

Down-to-there necklaces are hot this coming season. Wear them alone for a streamlined summer look or layered with lots of bling for rock-star appeal.

Animal print bag

Invest in an exotic animal print bag that's all the rage! A python tote is slithery sleek, but zebra and leopard prints are roar-ingly chic options, too.

ROBERTO CAVALLI

PHOTOS FROM WWW.STYLE.COM

EYE shadow using Purple Passion Collection

New's Cool

Ria Francisco-Prieto

Welcome the beautiful new you!

I FEEL THAT THE NEW YEAR IS LIKE the first day of school. I remember the best thing about a new school year was getting new provisions for classes, and I happen to like occasions which allow me to have new stuff. Ditch the old and welcome the new.

Since I'm not in school anymore, the new year is a very big event for me. I always make sure I reflect on my past year and try to improve in the new year.

One thing I do, which most of my friends find funny, is fix my closet and remove the clothes I haven't worn, or clothes I know I will not wear.

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Most often, a good shade can make a big difference. And that's what this collection offers.

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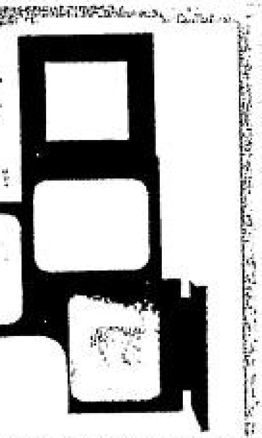
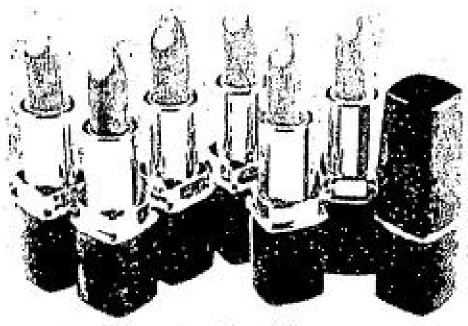


COLOUR Collection Bi-Cake Powder Foundation

EYE shadow using Golden Sands collection

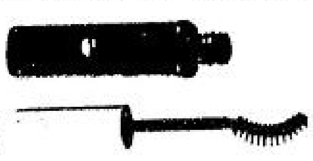
COLOUR Collection Blush-on Duo

COLOUR Collection Eye shadow Trio



COLOUR Collection Lipsticks

EYE shadow using Berry Stains collection



COLOUR Collection Mega-lash Mascara

EYE shadow using Blue Riviera collection

Dealing with post-New Year breakouts

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

IT SEEMED AS IF MOTHER Nature was just waiting for Jan. 1 to pass for her to take away the cool weather. Well, because of this, there has been a higher incidence of breakouts, especially on the back, shoulders and chest area.

Breakout is caused by the drier "winter skin" clogging up the pore opening on the skin's surface. Meanwhile, oil production is back on high due to the surge in humidity. Trapped oil, dead skin buildup and the pressure cause eruptions in the form of acne.

The face has been spared for most of us due to the incorporation of exfoliating products in our skincare regimen. For the past four years, this has [illegible] I've prevented by going for frequent body scrub treatments with bleach at any Belo Clinic (with bleach to dry and fade zit marks as well), and certain spas.

There are, of course, days when I feel too lazy or busy to leave the house, so I have put together several products to keep my body smooth and clear.

Cleansers: Neutrogena Deep Clean cleansing gel (not the foaming face wash). For some reasons, this is too strong for most faces; but it is fantastic for clearing up and preventing body acne when used as a shower gel.

VMV id soap is a salicylic acid bar with exfoliating apricot grains.

What these two products have in common is that both slough off dead skin cells to keep the pore opening clear.

Treatment: To control breakouts on back and chest, use VMV id sweat acne and overall antibacterial monolaurin gel; VMV Superskin 3 Acne controlling exfoliating astringent; Belo CHAT 2% (Clindamycin, Hydroquinone, Alum and Tretinoin); or Mario Badescu Special Cleansing lotion.

Moisturizers: The treatments can be drying and lead to itching, but you cannot just use any old lotion as it may clog the pores once again. My recommendations are Jergens Skin Smoothing lotion with AHA and BHA, Neostrata AHA 15 lotion, or NeoStrata 15 PHA for drier and more sensitive skin.

This regimen has not only saved me from severe acne breakouts, but also uncomfortable, itchy and scar-inducing ingrown hair (which is the result of waxing and shaving unwanted hair).

It would be nice to do the regimen daily for best results, but let's be realistic and admit that most of you are not half as in love with beauty regimens as I am, so try to do it around three times a week.

The moment I turned 35, my hormones just went berserk. I expected wrinkles and fine lines to hit me, and I stood prepared like a brave soldier waiting at the border with my arsenal of anti-aging products.

Then suddenly... What the heck was going on? As if I was transported back to puberty, my forehead was full of pimples.

Like a woman possessed, I tretinoin-ed my face. We're talking 0.1 percent of Stieva-A here, like mad, and although the rest of my face became poreless, firm, smooth as rose petals, my forehead zits flattened out and left marks; later, new ones just popped out.

A consultant at Dermalogica pointed out that they were baby hairs growing out of my forehead caused by overactive hormones. That was when I decided to have my forehead waxed by Ella from Salon de Ken.

It has been less than a week and my forehead has cleared up; it almost matches the texture and appearance of the rest of my face. Pores are smaller, the area looks brighter, and the zits are fast responding to treatment.

Common areas where baby hairs grow on face are the nose, upper lip and chin. Having these areas waxed or lasered off will control breakouts.

VMV, Jergens, Stieva and Neutrogena are available at leading drug stores. Mario Badescu is exclusive at Essenses, Rustan's. To inquire about Neostrata, call 2424242; Salon De Ken, 8481886; Belo, 8442939, or e-mail info@belomed.com

E-mail the author at kinnysalas@yahoo.com

DEEP CLEAN
Neutrogena

NEUTROGENA Deep Clean Cleanser

Jergens
Skin Smoothing

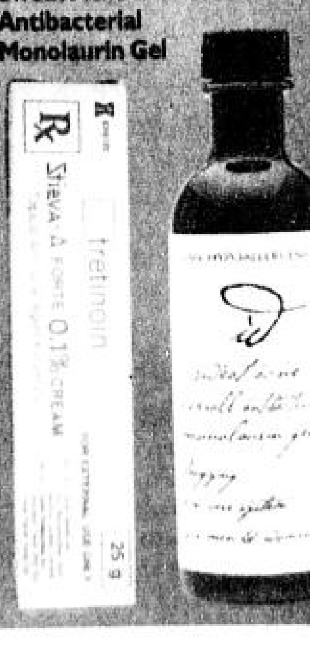
JERGENS Skin Smoothing Moisturizer

ID soap with apricot and salicylic acid

MARIO BADESCU
SPECIAL CLEANSING LOTION
NeoStrata
Lotion plus

MARIO Badescu Special cleansing 'O' for back and chest only (left); Neostrata 15 AHA lotion plus

STIEVA-A forte (left) and id Sweat Acne and Overall Antibacterial Monolaurin Gel



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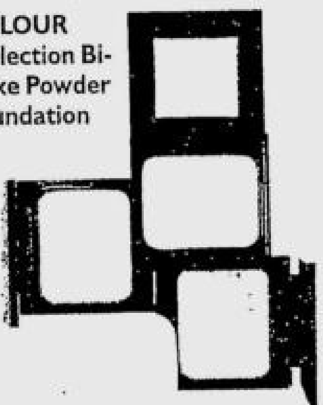
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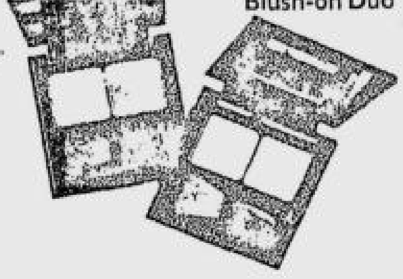
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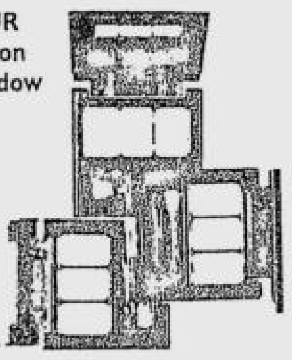
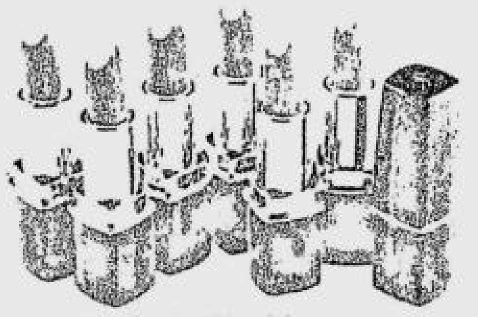
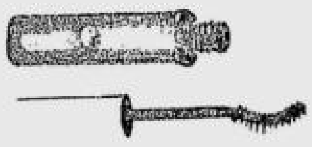
EYE shadow using Berry Stains collection

EYE shadow using Blue Riviera collection


COLOUR Collection Eye shadow Trio


COLOUR Collection Lipsticks


COLOUR Collection Mega-lash Mascara

Dealing with post-New Year breakouts

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

IT SEEMED AS IF MOTHER Nature was just waiting for Jan. 1 to pass for her to take away the cool weather. Well, because of this, there has been a higher incidence of breakouts, especially on the back, shoulders and chest area.

Breakout is caused by the drier "winter skin" clogging up the pore opening on the skin's surface. Meanwhile, oil production is back on high due to the surge in humidity. Trapped oil, dead skin buildup and the pressure cause eruptions in the form of acne.

The face has been spared for most of us due to the incorporation of exfoliating products in our skin-care regimen. For the past four years this has been something I've prevented by going for frequent body scrub treatments with bleach at any Belo Clinic (with bleach to dry and fade zit marks as well), and certain spas.

There are, of course, days when I feel too lazy or busy to leave the house, so I have put together several products to keep my body smooth and clear.

Cleansers: Neutrogena Deep Clean cleansing gel (not the foaming face wash). For some reasons, this is too strong for most faces; but it is fantastic for clearing up and preventing body acne when used as a shower gel.

VMV id soap is a salicylic acid bar with exfoliating apricot grains.

What these two products have in common is that both slough off dead skin cells to keep the pore opening clear.

Treatment: To control breakouts on back and chest, use VMV id sweat acne and overall antibacterial monolaurin gel; VMV Superskin 3 Acne controlling exfoliating astringent; Belo CHAT 2% (Clindamycin, Hydroquinone, Alum and Tretinoin); or Mario Badescu Special Cleansing lotion.

Moisturizers: The treatments can be drying and lead to itching, but you cannot just use any old lotion as it may clog the pores once again. My recommendations are Jergens Skin Smoothing lotion with AHA and BHA, Neostrata AHA 15 lotion, or NeoStrata 15 PHA for drier and more sensitive skin.

This regimen has not only saved me from severe acne breakouts, but also uncomfortable, itchy and scar-inducing ingrown hair (which is the result of waxing and shaving unwanted hair).

It would be nice to do the regimen daily for best results, but let's be realistic and admit that most of you are not half as in love with beauty regimens as I am, so try to do it around three times a week.

The moment I turned 35, my hormones just went berserk. I expected wrinkles and fine lines to hit me, and I stood prepared like a brave soldier waiting at the border with my arsenal of anti-aging products.

Then suddenly... What the heck was going on? As if I was transported back to puberty, my forehead was full of pimples.

Like a woman possessed, I tretinoin-ed my face. We're talking 0.1 percent of Stieva-A here, like mad, and although the rest of my face became poreless, firm, smooth as rose petals, my forehead zits flattened out and left marks; later, new ones just popped out.

A consultant at Dermalogica pointed out that they were baby hairs growing out of my forehead caused by overactive hormones. That was when I decided to have my forehead waxed by Ella from Salon de Ken.

It has been less than a week and my forehead has cleared up; it almost matches the texture and appearance of the rest of my face. Pores are smaller, the area looks brighter, and the zits are fast responding to treatment.

Common areas where baby hairs grow on face are the nose, upper lip and chin. Having these areas waxed or lasered off will control breakouts.

VMV, Jergens, Stieva and Neutrogena are available at leading drug stores. Mario Badescu is exclusive at Essenses, Rustan's. To inquire about Neostrata, call 2424242; Salon De Ken, 8481886; Belo, 8442939, or e-mail info@belomed.com

E-mail the author at kinnysalas@yahoo.com

NEUTROGENA Deep Clean Cleanser

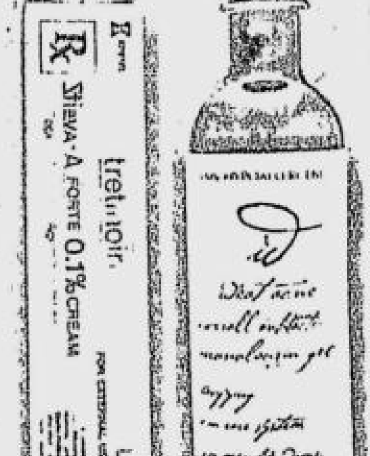
JERGENS Skin Smoothing Moisturizer

MARIO BADESCU
NeoStrata
Lotion plus

MARIO Badescu Special cleansing 'O' for back and chest only (left); Neostrata 15 AHA lotion plus

ID soap with apricot and salicylic acid

STIEVA-A forte (left) and id Sweat Acne and Overall Antibacterial Monolaurin Gel



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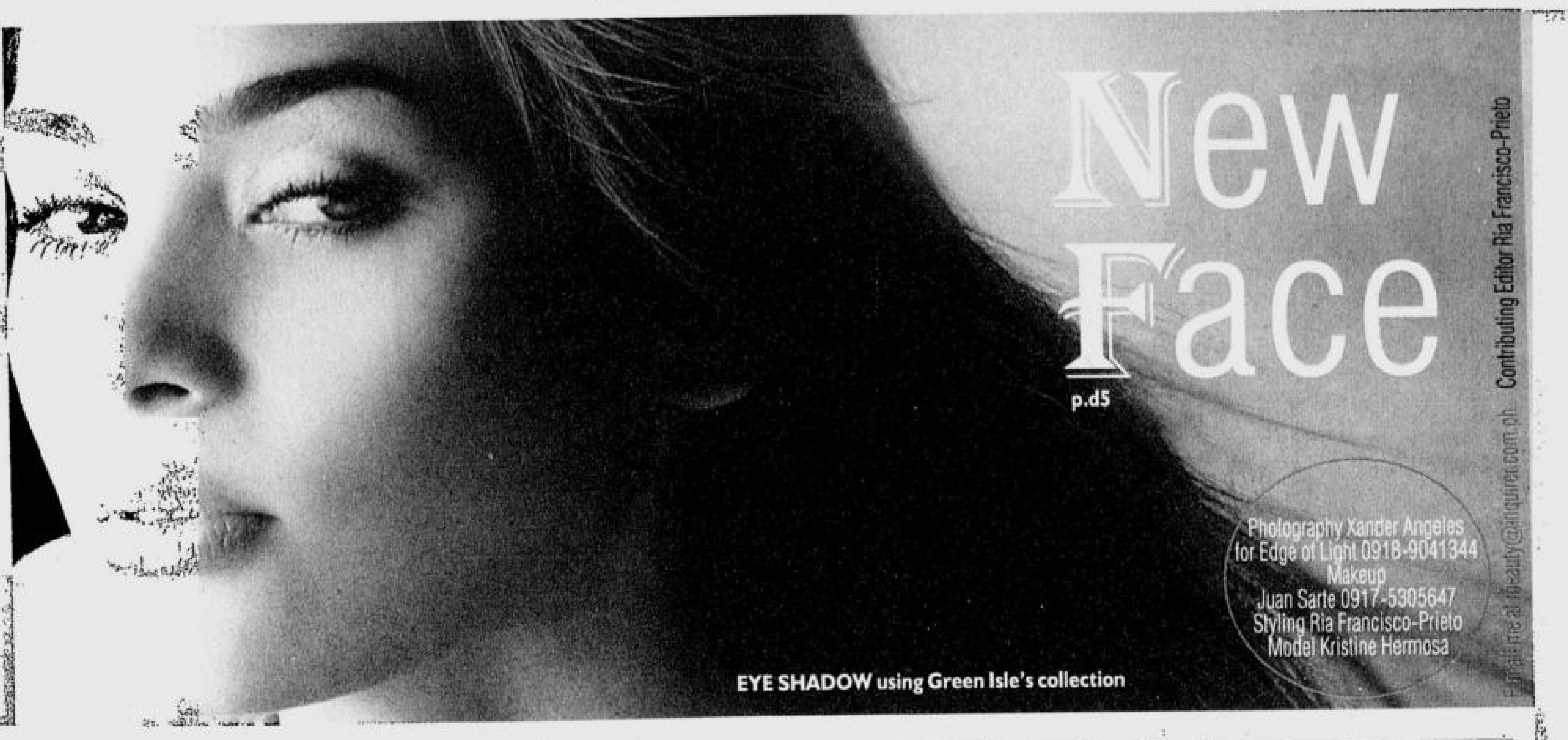
BEAUTY



Contributing Editor Ria Francisco-Prieto

E-mail me at beauty@inquirer.com.ph

Photography Xander Angeles for Edge of Light 0918-9041344
Makeup Juan Sarte 0917-5305647
Styling Ria Francisco-Prieto
Model Kristine Hermosa

EYE SHADOW using Green Isle's collection

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BEAUTY SHOUT OUT:

'This coming February, watch out for Shiseido's launch of its Maquillage collection! Expect it to be bright and very fashionable!' —*Cindy Arguelles-Lichauco, sales manager*